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Mercredi
17 mai 2023

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures),
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 May 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 mai 2023

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prayers.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting is cancelled.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR UN ONTARIO FORT (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 16, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to implement Budget measures and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: In my remarks on the budget this morning, what I would like to do is continue the conversation in this chamber we've been having about community safety. As I do that, I'm mindful of the fact that this is a challenging moment in our province, certainly challenging in eastern Ontario back home.

Today is one of the days that we are going to be remembering Sergeant Eric Mueller, who was tragically killed in Bourget, Ontario. I know members of the government are going to be going to the funeral service today. I'm glad they are. I just want to say from my perspective, as an eastern Ontario politician, days like this are hard. But I want us to think about how we preserve community safety and honour Sergeant Mueller and his family.

I also want to be thinking about Carl Reinboth. Carl Reinboth was a street outreach worker from the Somerset West Community Health Centre, one of three terrific community health centres we're blessed to have in our community, who was tragically killed as well in a truly tragic accident—a gentleman in a psychotic episode.

We miss Carl. We miss Sergeant Mueller. We miss all people who devote themselves to public service and first response. There are so many first responders, Speaker, and today I just want to begin my remarks on the budget thinking about community safety by paying respect to Sergeant Mueller and to Carl.

What I want to ask, Speaker, is a rhetorical question, before I get into some details on two aspects of what the government has proposed in this bill: How do we keep each other safe? It's a rhetorical question I asked in my community column last Friday. We publish a newsletter every week online—I know a lot of members do—and I asked community members to give me their two cents about what we could do as a province to keep each other more safe. I got a lot of comments back from people remarking on the amount of neighbours in our community in Ottawa who are suffering openly in the street, living in the street.

What we know is that, in Ottawa at least, there are 1,400 people in Ottawa every day who are homeless, about 8,000, if you think about the city in the course of the year, who interact with that position and find their way out one way or another. What we know is those neighbours—and they are neighbours, Speaker—who are living on the street are disproportionately drawn from certain communities as opposed to others. About 2.5% of our city in Ottawa are Indigenous, but 24% of the homeless population are Indigenous. About 6% of our city are Black Canadians, but 21% of the people who are homeless on the street are Black.

What I hear from community service providers, when they talk about folks who are chronically underhoused, chronically homeless, and folks who for whatever reason, for whatever trauma they are carrying around with them, as people have told me, live their lives in plain sight all day, all times of year—what life is like for them. People who wrote me after my column last Friday were saying they were noticing alarming behaviours that researchers tell me are linked to the toxicity of the illicit drug supply in our streets, alarming behaviours that are linked to the mental health crisis in our community.

Ana from old Ottawa South wrote me about a neighbour she knew who had been assaulted outside a coffee shop and is still in hospital after receiving several injuries, including a face fracture that people believe may not fully heal. I also know of another neighbour outside Hartman's grocery store—you know Hartman's, Speaker, in Somerset West, at Somerset and Bank—who was just walking to get her groceries and encountered a neighbour in significant psychotic duress and was assaulted as well.

In each of these situations, what we know is that the first-response capacity we have in our community is over-taxed. What do I mean by that? What I mean by that is, at

the moment, what the Ottawa Police Service tells our community is the cost of interactions with homeless folks in our community—there are about 60,000 interactions per year—is \$25 million. But if we think about the amount of money we are spending taking police first responders into interactions with homeless neighbours, when those are the exact folks we need when there's a pileup on the 417, the exact folks we need when we have a major weather event like the wind storm that hit our community last May—the police so aptly and efficiently and effectively ensured our safety in that moment for neighbours trapped in their homes. They were terrific. Police are the ones who have the responsibility, with the monopoly on the use of force, to keep us safe in moments of significant public duress and safety.

What police officers in Ottawa Centre tell me is that they don't want to be the first point of response for 60,000 interactions with folks who are chronically homeless. In fact, I hear again and again from our community officers that they feel the province and the city could do a lot more to support them.

I want to talk about some of those community services—because in the budget, with the Homelessness Prevention Program the government announced, the increase of \$202 million, we have opportunities for the province to invest—that have been making inroads to deal with those 60,000 interactions and to take our police into a direct public safety response, instead of constant interactions with neighbours who live with trauma and who are homeless.

I want to talk about the Salvation Army in Ottawa, who maintain several vans that are fully equipped to deal with any number of needs homeless neighbours have. It could be a pair of socks, it could be a cup of coffee, it could be a first aid interaction, or it could be a ride to a home or a shelter or a drop-in facility that our city maintains. The cost of that program, which runs from 11 a.m. in the morning to 3 a.m. at night, seven days a week, is around \$500,000 a year. I mentioned that the cost of asking our police force in Ottawa to interact 60,000 times a year is \$25 million. What the Salvation Army tells me is, for them to staff up with an additional van could be half the cost of the allocation they currently have—\$500,000—and what that would make is a meaningful difference in the lives of people who are living and struggling with trauma, and it would also follow the advice of officers I've spoken to who want that help.

0910

I also want to note the Somerset West Community Health Centre, who maintain several programs, and I want to name a couple that could benefit from what the government has announced in this budget. They have a crisis outreach program that was operating during the pandemic—and it's operating now—that doesn't just deal with situational responses in neighbourhoods. When there's a homeless neighbour in crisis interacting with a small business or another resident and that person, that business doesn't feel safe, they can call the Somerset West Community Health Centre. They're proactive: This outreach

program goes into rooming houses, goes into supportive housing, goes into low-rental, and visits neighbours sleeping outside in the street, to get them the support they need, for a cost of \$315,000 a year. If we invested another \$226,000 a year, what the Somerset West Community Health Centre tells me is, you could employ a full-time nurse practitioner and a dedicated community worker for this program. And I can tell you, those folks would save lives. They would make sure people found out where they could go to get a decent meal at one of our community kitchens. They could connect, perhaps, spiritually, if they're Indigenous, to some of the fantastic Indigenous cultural organizations we have in our city, or spiritually if they have faith of other kinds. Speaker, \$226,000 compared to \$25 million is a significant difference.

I also want to say that every time we give someone an opportunity to do something other than end up in a paramedic ambulance, a police cruiser, a jail or a mental health bed in a hospital, we don't just achieve dignity for the person; we achieve something stupendous for economic circumstances for the province. It is cheaper and it is more efficient for the government to take aspects of this \$202 million and its Homelessness Prevention Program and put it into direct community services. I've worked already with members of this government to connect them directly to leaders in our community who can put this money to good use.

In the last minute I have, I just want to mention one other thing, and that is the housing allocation that Ottawa has received. What we know is, we have an increase of \$800,000 with the Homelessness Prevention Program allocation for our city. We were on track to expect \$16 million to \$17 million. What that would have done is create 54 units of supportive housing in our city. So, working with organizations like Salus, Options Bytown, Somerset West, Carlington Community Health Centre, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, I'm pleading to this government to make sure that Ottawa receives a good allocation here, because if we don't, what we're going to have are more criminal justice interactions with police first responders, which is not what neighbours are telling me we need to make sure we can give people dignity, give people respect and—let's hope, for the most part, after the prayer we had this morning—a new lease on life.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We'll now have questions to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: To the member from Ottawa Centre: The supply chain of illegal drugs which is reaching the people he spoke about on the street doesn't come from the street. The supply chain of illegal drugs that is harming people on the street and causing the problems of which the member from Ottawa Centre spoke comes from the supply chain established by organized crime. For example, the RCMP seized 60 bricks of cocaine at the Ambassador Bridge in April of this year. One of the ways you save people on the street is you bust up that supply chain.

So my question to the member from Ottawa Centre is this: Why is he abandoning the people on the street by promoting a "defund the police" policy?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'll be honest in my response to what the member has said. I'm not interested in playing culture war games in this place when it comes to community safety, and I would invite the member opposite to consider the same. We can try to play "gotcha" politics in this place by using catchphrases, or we can make the community investments we need to make to keep our community safe. I talked about specific investments we can use to make the community safe. I note the federal Conservative leader was playing similar games in the House of Commons yesterday in question period.

We have to be driven by evidence. We have to be driven by effective solutions that work. The case I was making this morning that I didn't hear any evidence or response to from that member—I hope I hear it in debate—is, are we making the right investments, are we helping first responders and are we helping neighbours in crisis? Those are the pertinent questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Ottawa Centre for his passion for community safety. I wanted to ask him, if there was one thing that was missing in the budget that would really contribute to community safety in Ottawa, what would that thing be?

Mr. Joel Harden: Housing. That's the biggest thing. You can't help somebody if they're not housed. At the risk of seeming extreme—I don't mean to—you can't help somebody if they're dead either. The toxicity of drugs in our streets is creating erratic behaviours, and the pilot that the federal government has embarked upon with the province of British Columbia is already showing evidence, contrary to what the federal Conservative leader has said, that people are getting control of their selves, finding pathways to wellness. We need to follow the evidence.

Housing, supportive housing, and support for people with mental health and addictions—I heard the associate minister of the government yesterday praise those initiatives, and I'm glad to hear that. I'm glad to hear that, in this place, we're following the evidence and not the culture wars.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Based on that note of housing—thank you very much for raising that—will you support what we're proposing with the increase in investment in the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program by over \$200 million annually? I can tell you for a fact that in my community, York region, this meant a 76% increase. I'll be meeting with them soon because they said they want to meet with me and talk to me about the great things this is going to do for York region.

I would hope, based on that feedback, and knowing it's \$200 million annually—I would have to say to the opposite member, please support us with this initiative.

Mr. Joel Harden: Well, first of all, to the member for Newmarket–Aurora, I'm very glad that's going to help your community. What I can tell you from Ottawa Centre's

perspective though, and I think you've heard this from Ottawa members in the chamber, is that \$800,000 as an increase to this allocation for us is well short of what we expected. We were expecting between \$16 million and \$17 million because Ottawa deals with many neighbours who come from far beyond our city boundaries. There are people from way up north who come to Ottawa to access health care, Inuit people in particular, and that falls far short of what we need in order to help people with respect to homelessness prevention. As I mentioned before, an alarming amount of homeless neighbours back home are Indigenous, and we need resources in order to be able to help those neighbours figure out how to get themselves back on track.

I'm glad the program's working for your community. Jury's out for me on whether I'm going to support it. I need to make sure there's enough money in the bill to support all communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member for Ottawa Centre. Thank you for your speech. I know you very much care about the residents of Ottawa Centre.

My question is focused on housing. When you look at this budget, do you believe this budget adequately addresses the housing affordability crisis that you see in your riding?

Mr. Joel Harden: No, it doesn't. The member and I have served on committee, where we've looked at Bill 97, which the member from Newmarket–Aurora was just talking about too, and what I know about this province is that there is a significant amount of richness and wealth, there's a significant amount of cranes that you'll see all up over this city and all up over our city, but it's not necessarily building affordable housing.

We need the government, we need the public to make sure we incentivize and figure out ways to help people get housing. It doesn't always mean cranes, either. Supportive housing can be repurposing existing rental stock, supportive housing could be wrapping services around places like rooming houses, but we can't do that on \$800,000 a year with the Homelessness Prevention Program, and we can't do that with the limited resources currently allocated towards public and non-profit housing in this province. We need much, much more.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member from Ottawa Centre asked about specific investments in the budget. The specific investment that I'm referring to is the \$13.4 million to continue the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy, which of course, as we know, is the primary way of busting up the drug supply chain, so that the drugs don't reach people on the street and the people who the member from Ottawa Centre was talking about.

So my question to the member is this: Given that he wants specific investments in the budget to assist the

people he spoke about, will he support that specific measure, the \$13.4 million to bust up the drug supply chain, or will he be continuing to promote the NDP “defund the police” policy?

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, what I’m going to rise in this place and defend all the time is community safety. The member can engage in any number of culture-war statements he wants, but what I’m going to ask him and what I’m going to ask every member in this House is: What does that accomplish by the day’s end? What does that actually accomplish? Will it bring back the lives we’ve lost of first responders? Will it bring back Sergeant Mueller? Will it bring back Carl Reinboth? Will it give people a new lease on life, or is it just about scoring points on Twitter?

I’m not here to score points on Twitter. I’m here to fight for my community. I’m here to make sure that we do right by people living in crisis, and comments like that? It’s just performance. I’m interested in actual solutions. Believe it or not, Speaker, I’ve found that there are times members of this government will do that. I invite this member to talk to those members of this government, because those are people actually engaged in serious work, not games.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you so much this morning to the member for explaining the real lived lives of people that are on the street. The solutions aren’t simple and they’re not, in some ways, the bumper statements that we’re hearing in the House today, so we need to come together and understand the continuum of supports that we need.

In Hamilton currently, we can tell there are 1,500 people who are homeless, living on the streets, and we have 500 shelter beds. We’ve seen the closure now of three agencies, the kind that you described in Ottawa, that were serving people living on the streets, including Hamilton Mental Health Outreach, that were dealing with people right on the street, serving them where they’ve managed to find some shelter.

And so, can you speak a little bit further to all of our communities, how cutting that kind of service, as you said, is not good for anyone? It lands on municipal taxpayer dollars, and it lands on the police budgets that should be directing their resources elsewhere.

Mr. Joel Harden: I thank the member for the question. I’ll just go through a few figures that are drawn from evidence: Supportive housing costs \$53 a day. An Ontario jail cell costs \$233 a day. A federal jail cell costs \$330 a day. An Ontario hospital bed dedicated for mental health crisis costs \$441 a day.

I began my life as a community organizer, Speaker, in this city, working with the great Jack Layton to make sure people didn’t freeze to death on the streets of this city and got access through a housing-first program. We convinced a Conservative mayor, Mel Lastman, to invest millions of dollars in a housing program called the Streets to Homes program, that the city currently has, which needs another tranche of reinvestment.

But there are solutions that exist, Speaker. We don’t have to keep throwing money at the problem in ineffective ways and putting people in difficult situations. We can and must do better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It’s always a pleasure and a privilege to take my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin, talking to the budget bill this morning. As I’ve always said, I try to bring a northern Ontario lens to the floor of the Legislature, and that’s what I’m going to be doing this morning, talking about particular matters that were not addressed for individuals in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin.

I want to start with Donna Benke from Elliot Lake, who is an ODSP recipient. Donna is a huge advocate for fairness. She has shared many of her life stories with me, and her struggles that she has. She doesn’t want to wish anything worse for anybody else, but she does want to be seen; she wants to be heard, because as a single individual without children at home, she has not benefited in any way, shape or form from some of the benefits that have come from this government. She wants to be heard and is saying, “What about me? As an individual who is hurt, who cannot work, who cannot supplement my income, why aren’t there any supplements for me?” That’s one of the individuals.

I want to talk about Roslyn Taylor. Roslyn Taylor owns a small sawmill on Manitoulin Island. Roslyn has shared her hydro costs for her small mill with me. She employs about 20 to 25 employees. This has gone on with this government and the previous government—that I brought it to their attention. Her usage fees, on average, range somewhere between \$700 to \$800. Her delivery fees are always in excess of double what she is utilizing. I’ve worked with the minister—and I actually was with the minister at a reception just a couple of days ago, and I asked him once again, “When will your ministry reach out to Roslyn at Taylor Sawmill?” I wanted to provide him with her direct contact and say, “Hey, what can you do?” The minister, to his credit, indicated to me that it would take some major policy changes in order to address her issues. Okay. Well, that’s why you’re in government: to make those changes. We didn’t see those changes in this budget. Roslyn is still receiving those high costs for her sawmill, and the 25 jobs that she provides for individuals on Manitoulin Island are at stake here. So I’m hoping that, finally, the government will reach out to Roslyn, or Hydro One, and look at some of the savings that they can provide for her so she can continue doing the operation and the work that she enjoys doing.

The other thing that wasn’t addressed in this budget is a serious doctor recruitment and retainment program for rural and northern communities. I didn’t see that in this budget.

I see this government making some investments. I see legislation which is opening up more opportunities for the privatization of certain surgeries in this province. I see this government creating an environment where we’re going to

need more agency nurses. I see this government creating, again, an environment where we're going to be losing a lot of our public service workers—our doctors, our nurses, our PSWs and so on—to going towards the private sector. I see a lot of nurses who were burnt out due to a lot of decisions that were made by this government during the COVID pandemic, which now—these individuals have left and are now reappearing as agency nurses at a much higher cost. I don't see how they've addressed that in the budget. I don't see how they've addressed the need for locums in northern Ontario.

The hospital up in Wawa has been looking to this government and trying to get this government to continue with the locum days that they've had there. They're down another doctor, and they do not have the proper coverage that they had. What is going to happen? The three remaining doctors who are there are going to get burnt out, and they're going to move on, and they're going to leave, and then Wawa is going to be left out.

This is the exact position that is happening on the west end of Manitoulin Island and Gore Bay. There are three doctors there: There's one doctor who is holding down the basic practice that is there; and there's a husband and wife, but they're looking to move on because they're at an age where they need to retire. That has not been addressed. Again, a serious doctor recruitment and retainment program is not addressed in this budget.

I will always give credit where credit is due, and I want to thank the Minister of Transportation, because she has actually responded to the need for a turning lane and investments in highways, particularly on Highway 17, as you turn in off Goulais River into the trading post and also the LCBO that is there. There's a family, there's an individual who passed away a few years ago. We're finally going to make the investments to improve that area and add a turning lane, making it a little bit safer.

There are some investments that went into Manitoulin Island, as well, with those highways, but the resurfacing that was done just last summer—I was out on those highways this summer, and they're already starting to deteriorate. So there are going to be some major improvements that are going to be needed to be done.

Highway 637 into Killarney is an absolute mess.

There are more investments that need to be done into those areas, and are they on this government's radar?

Highway 551, Highway 542—again, there are more investments that need to be done in those areas.

Were there home care investments—a real strategy for this government to invest into home care. If we are actually going to prevent and help long-term-care homes, we need to have home care investments, major home care investments, because people want to remain staying in their homes.

0930

In the short time that I had, these are the shortfalls that I've identified from a northern Algoma-Manitoulin lens, and unfortunately, this government has failed to meet these needs of Ontarians in the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for his contributions. I don't know what budget you were looking at, but the one I saw had \$1 billion for home care investment and moving \$569 million of it into this year to try to up-front the home care investments, which we also think are an extremely important part of our Ontario health team strategy: to make sure we move as much care as possible to home and community and out of hospital, leaving the hospitals available to do the work that can only be done in hospitals. So I hope the member will find, if he looks in that bill and also in the Your Health Plan, some of the things he's looking for.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member for her comments. Yes, I've looked at the budget, but the reality is that these dollars are not coming to northern Ontario and those resources are not coming to northern Ontario, and people at home are waiting days and days and hours for services. People are suffering additional illnesses at home, ending up in emergency rooms, ending up for more treatments and not getting the care that they get at home, which would really mean more savings for us, if they would get that actual care in their homes. A strategy for doctor recruitment and retention and home care specifically targeted for northern Ontario is absolutely required, and it is not present or absolutely identified within the context of this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin for his comments. He's very passionate about health care in northern Ontario. What kind of investments are missing in this budget that would help in places like Wawa? And what does the future of health care look like without those investments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I think I just finished highlighting some of those issues that I responded to the government on, that there is really no targeted recruitment and retention of doctors to really incentivize them to come to northern Ontario.

Right now, a lot of northern Ontario hospitals and communities are relying on locums. Locums are coming in at a much higher cost, which is adding a lot of stress on our health care system. The same thing happens with home care. The bodies are just not there. Why? Because the low-wage policies that this government has discourages people from going into those types of jobs. People have great pride and have consciences and want to take care of their community members, but if these low-wage policies that this government has in place, that we see under the private sector, don't change, if a strategy does not get developed in order to attract those people and make those investments into those environments, we're going to continue seeing people suffer across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Just on the doctor issue and investments in northern Ontario, as you know, our government has been making historic investments into

physicians. We've been investing into medical schools, including the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and we've made a number of physician services investments across Ontario: \$32 million for the remote First Nations family medicine residency program at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine; \$7.36 million for 77 new physicians through the Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative, which offers financial incentives for these physicians; and we've distributed medical education programs throughout the province so that we can make sure we get more health care providers in northern Ontario, where we know absolutely that they are needed. We're working very hard to make sure that we fund these initiatives. The budget gives some of the funding dollars, as we talked about with the home care, and the Your Health Plan gives a lot of the strategy. It's a strategy that hasn't been produced in a book form for a very long time, so you have a strategy there to look at.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I've looked at that and I've met with the hospitals, I've met with the agencies, I've met with the home care providers, and this plan is not working. What you're doing, although you keep doing it and you have been in government now for over a term and a half—those strategies are not working. They're not actually materializing with more doctors in northern Ontario. We keep seeing individuals that are leaving this area. What we see is our hospitals have their budgets frozen and have not had some significant investments. What a lot of northern hospitals are asking for is some flexibility in order to move some of their funding so that they can continue to create and fill in the positions that they have in order to provide the care that they have been for many years.

I hear what the government is saying is, "We're putting money into this and we're doing something and we're making the investments." But those decisions and that path are not working, and that's what a lot of hospitals in northern Ontario and care providers are telling this government, but you're not listening to them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate? The member from Richmond Hill.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thornhill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to speak to the third reading of Building a Strong Ontario Act in support of our government and the Minister of Finance. We're building Ontario for today, tomorrow and the next day by driving economic growth, lowering the cost of doing business, attracting new investments and getting key infrastructure built faster. The minister's sensible and measured plan will build an Ontario that the people of this province can be proud of not only today but in the future. In the face of global economic uncertainty, we are building an Ontario that continues to have a resilient economy, an Ontario that is strong.

We're working for Ontarians, and I want to demonstrate how this bill will have a direct impact on the people of my riding of Thornhill, as well as the rest of this province, by taking you on another tour. Let's begin at one of the most famous delis in Thornhill; this is the Centre

Street Deli. I believe some of you may be acquainted with the Centre Street Deli because Nana actually brought their very famous smoked meat sandwiches to the Legislature, and they sold out halfway through the event. It was pretty remarkable.

They're actually located right beside the constituency office. They're so popular you cannot get a parking spot at lunchtime during certain times of the week in my community. They were founded over 35 years ago. It's a legacy that was continued by three dedicated employees who purchased from the original owner, and Nana, Ganesh and Kuna now lead the organization.

But despite its popularity, the deli closes every day at 5 p.m. I asked Nana, "Why don't you keep it open longer?" She advised she would love to keep the restaurant open longer, but unfortunately, she's unable to for a couple of reasons, including a lack of available staff. It's a common issue that we hear across this province, which is why our government is enabling an estimated \$8 billion in cost savings and support for eligible Ontario employers in 2023, making it easier for these small business people. Almost half of these savings and supports are going directly to small businesses like Nana's and Centre Street Deli. That includes expanding access to the small business corporate income tax rate by increasing the phase-out range. That would provide Ontario's small businesses with an additional Ontario income tax relief of \$265 million over the next few years.

Our government is expanding the Ontario bridge training program by an additional \$3 million in the 2023-24 year to help internationally trained immigrants find employment in their fields and get faster access to training and supports toward a licence or a certificate. More training and employment for immigrants means more staff who can help small businesses, like employers like Nana. With added cost savings measures and tax incentives, Nana will have the tools she needs to run her business effectively.

I'm going to take another tour around the neighbourhood, and I'm going to take everybody to the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, which is one of the oldest churches in my riding. It was actually founded in the 1830s. I've been there many times. The Holy Trinity also functions as a homeless shelter with 25 beds as part of Blue Door Shelters. I've had the opportunity to volunteer there and help and serve meals and hand out blankets.

Madam Speaker, with this budget, we are investing an additional \$202 million each year in the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program to help those experiencing or those at risk of homelessness and those escaping intimate partner violence, which is a huge issue. These investments will support the community organizations delivering supportive housing. Those investments will help Holy Trinity.

0940

Let's move over to Henderson Avenue, where we've got a brand new school. It's almost finished. I drove by it yesterday. Literally, I'd say it's got maybe a month more of work to do, and it's scheduled to open for the students in September. This new school will ensure that more

students in Thornhill have better access to education, and I cannot wait to see it in action and up and running. I sat on parent council for over a decade with my local school, and I know how important this school is going to be to the community.

The passage of this bill will allow schools like this one to be best supported and prepare our children. This is because our budget outlines plans to invest \$15 billion in capital grants over 10 years to expand and renew schools, and help create 86,000 new child care spaces by December 2026. When I drove by that school the other day, I saw that new child care space to the side. They're easily recognizable. As somebody who has worked within the system, it was a very joyous moment for me, because I know when you've got new kids, you've got parents, you've got families moving in, it's good for the community. Improving the education of our children and increasing child care spaces helps our next generation have the best possible foundation for building their lives, and as a mother, I understand how important this is to parents all over Ontario—parents and grandparents. In Thornhill, we call them bubbes and zaydes. It's all good.

And speaking of that foundation, this budget aims to help close to 27,000 students earn credits towards both their Ontario secondary school diploma and post-secondary degree or certificate. We want to prepare our children for the jobs of the future, and we're setting them up for success. That includes dual-credit opportunities in health-care-related courses for an additional 1,400 secondary students, which I think is a marvellous incentive. It's a win-win for all the parties involved. The kids get exposure to this very important sector, and they're able to gain credits for their future.

Madam Speaker, many parents and grandparents have approached me to talk about the fact that their children and grandchildren cannot study to become doctors close to home, which is why our government's plan also includes helping more Ontario students become doctors by adding more undergraduate and postgraduate medical training seats right here in Ontario with the new medical schools in Scarborough and Brampton. We need these doctors. This is another great way of ensuring that Ontarians are able to get the health care they need and deserve.

Madam Speaker, let us now drive over to the Improve centre; it's farther west in my riding, closer to the highway. There's a not-for-profit called Bata to Batapreneur—also known as b2B. They just graduated 40 students from their business workshop. Giving young adults exposure to creating a plan for business is such an important thing, and our plan includes providing \$2 million to the Futurpreneur Canada program, which helps young entrepreneurs grow their skills and achieve their business goals. More students will be able to nurture their interest in business and pursue successful careers in business according to our plan, Madam Speaker. This will not only supports the success of our young professionals, but it will also grow our economy, and I am certain that their businesses—their future businesses, the seeds, these ideas—will provide invaluable contributions to our community. I always talk

about Thornhill being a group of self-starters—we start something from nothing—and it's with that generation, that seed that's handed out to these students, that allows them to further move in a direction that's positive to create a small business.

I actually just hired a student that I'm happy to say I graduated from elementary school. He's got his own landscaping business—that's what he's doing this summer—and he's becoming an initiative for his own future, which is so important.

Okay, the tour is definitely not over. We're going to keep driving in our e-vehicle, and let's go over to the west side of Thornhill. Many folks may not know this, but there's an area that's home to some top industry manufacturers who are looking to grow and expand right in Vaughan. One of these is none other than the Give and Go bakeries, who make these delicious two-bite brownies. We're going to be providing an Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, which will provide a 10% refundable corporate tax credit. We're going to be providing important initiatives so that they can turn that money and invest back into the workers and innovate and become more competitive, because we don't want to lose these businesses to the south.

We are caring for our residents and we are creating a stronger Ontario. These are such important things—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for their comments on the debate. I've been hearing more of a trend with respect to before- and after-school programs, and the member talked about the schools and education. What's been happening is kids—in particular in my constituency, parents have come to me and we've met. Their children need special services and there's a lack of workers and therefore they're not able to help in that child care before and after school. I know how importantly the government wants to make sure that people have jobs and this is what's happening. These parents are going to have to decide if someone has to stay home to look after their child because their grandparents aren't able to help. As the member mentioned many times, that's the case for families.

What is this government doing about before- and after-school child care programs to make sure that there are workers there when kids need that special needs care in those schools?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the question on the other side. Yes, I have worked—both, actually, in my previous life. I dealt with matters under the child protection act, and I actually sat on parent council. That's part of the reason of why I'm here. But I'm really proud to talk about the 46,000 spaces that will be available in child care as a result of this government. We're working with our federal partners and we got that deal done so that we can make sure that these kids have proper places to go before and after school. I know this as a parent and this is such an important initiative.

One of the things that I did also want to bring up—and this is something that I really think is important—is that

we're increasing help for foster care kids. Previously, that ended at 21. These are the most vulnerable—and now it's going up to the age of 23. Given what I did in my previous life, I'm really happy to see this bridge to give our kids the best opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I appreciate our member, who has just taken us on a tour around Thornhill, and actually, what you're expressing is exactly what I'm seeing in Richmond Hill.

I'd like it if you can elaborate a little bit more on the immigration plan: how that helps the immigrants who come here and how that helps our economy.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the very important question. It's interesting because I've discussed this issue with the Minister of Labour and it is such an important tool that we allow more people—and we've expanded immigration to 18,000 individuals who will now be able to come into the skilled trades, who will now be allowed to be in Ontario as a result of these measures. These are important investments. And do you know what? When the minister and I were talking about this—we've removed the Canadian experience so that so many of these individuals can come here, they can work in their area of practice and we can solve so many issues all at once. I think these are very important, especially when you talk about the medical industries. I think that's so important.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm the member for University—Rosedale.

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I have a question for the member for Thornhill. In the budget, when we're looking at how much funding is going to elementary schools, middle schools and high schools, we have a lot of concerns. With the TDSB, there is an over \$60-million funding shortfall. The TDSB is looking at removing 522 staffing positions at a time when we know kids need as much help as they can get to catch up to the learning standard they need to be at for math and STEM and writing and reading. Do you think the amount of money in the budget for schools is enough? Because I personally don't think so.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. So, actually, I just wanted to provide some information. We've actually increased educational spending, despite the fact that there are less—we used to use the term “bums in seats” when I was in education. We've increased education every year. It's been something that has been at the forefront, and actually, it's one of the reasons I'm here right now. These are important initiatives because we do have to help our kids and it's important that they be given the opportunity.

Now, saying that, I also want to actually address the fact that there's been a 555% increase in mental health spending with respect to schools when you compare us to the last government. So I actually have to perhaps say that that's probably a very positive thing for our children in school today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I really enjoyed the tour, and especially the stop at the Centre Street Deli, which I've been to many times—delicious—thank you for taking me there this morning.

At the end, the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, which I think you just squeezed in there—can you explain to us why that is important to bolster our economy and create more jobs?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much for the question. Yes, and I wish I was actually full from the experience of going to the deli. It is hard to walk by it on a daily basis and not want to eat there, so it is accurate.

We've got a number of great industries in our neighbourhood, and the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit is so important to bolster Ontario's economy to create more jobs. So this credit will help local manufacturing companies invest and expand in their own businesses. Now, this is a key sector and contributor to the economic success of the province. In 2018, employment in Ontario's manufacturing sector declined by over 300,000 workers, but now, we're continuing to bring manufacturing back to Ontario and support local businesses with these kinds of measures. And we're going to, especially in Ontario—we want to keep all of those businesses here in Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I enjoyed the remarks from the member from Thornhill. I particularly liked hearing about the member describing herself as one of those politicians that will actually do a shift at a homeless shelter and help hand out blankets and food. I love to hear those stories. I'm wondering if, from her experience, she could—and it was the Anglican church, if I'm not mistaken, that you had volunteered at with the blankets and the food—the Anglican church in your community?

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes.

Mr. Joel Harden: Nonetheless, Speaker, to my question: I'm just wondering—I know of a lot of those organizations in the city of Ottawa and around the province of Ontario—do you think that organization could benefit from consistent funding? Because that's always the complaint I hear back from community organizations. They're volunteer driven. They're running one fundraising campaign to the next. Could that organization benefit from consistent funding, and if so, where could that come from in this budget?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the question. These locations are so important and vital in our communities. You've got these spots—one of the important things that I'm proud to talk about is the Ready, Set, Go Program, because it will allow us to get to these people, to get to these kids as young adults, so that we can help kids plan for the future. We want to make sure that a lot of these kids who were formerly in the foster care program, which I worked in, have that extra step. We found that the age of 21 wasn't necessarily adulthood, and by adding this

important step to the rest of their young life, they could get the best chance at being a productive individual and staying out of the system. We're happy that it's being extended to the age of 23.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's a pleasure for me to add my comments on Ontario's 2023 budget bill, Bill 85. As it turns out, I had the opportunity to travel with the pre-budget committee. We went to many places. We heard from many people. I got the opportunity to know many of the committee members, and I have a great deal of respect for everyone who shared this journey.

In terms of the people who presented at committee, I heard and I felt what they said, and I believe in my heart that committee members did as well. But this budget is as exciting as a three-pair of tube socks. At best, it missed the moment; at worst, it deliberately ignored the issues. We heard time and again at committee that Ontario, despite being the richest province, spends the least amount on services. We spend, in fact, \$2,000 less per resident in Ontario than other provinces. It is a shame.

When we look at many of the decisions that have been made in this budget—and let's face it, they are decisions—there are many which are bad business decisions, ones that do not recognize the value of upstream investment, ones that do not recognize or do not pay any heed to a cost-benefit analysis, and ones that simply don't have any consideration of return on investment. Many of these decisions include the Therme spa, the proliferation of losing court cases that this government seems hell bent on engaging in. In fact, I've lost count at the number; I think it's 14, 15, perhaps even 16 by this point. We also see decisions about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., where this government is undermining its own revenue streams.

We have seen Bill 124, a losing battle, time and again, that this government keeps throwing public money at. They're having a party with the public purse to simply attack nurses. We heard again at committee that nurses felt humiliated, they felt demeaned, and at the time when this legislation was passed, this government claimed that there was a need to be fiscally prudent and to be restrained. Yet through this budget, they have claimed how excited they are to return the province to the black, but it's on the backs of nurses and public workers.

We also see a government that refuses to release its mandate letters. What's the return on investment on that? What is being hidden?

Further, rather than not abiding by economic principles, we, in fact, see disinvestment from some of the things that Ontarians require. We see disinvestment in health care. We see disinvestment in mental health.

I had the opportunity to attend a mental health round table hosted by the MP for London–Fanshawe, Lindsay Mathyssen, and MP Gord Johns, and I'd like to quote Dr. Andrea Sereda. She indicated that when we consider our mental health crisis, we also should consider that this is a consequence of a lack of investment in housing, because

housing is health care. Housing, food and warmth are medicine. The government has not done its part to make sure that people are adequately housed. Poverty has a cost.

Further, if one looks at poverty as being the root cause and housing being something that the province and the federal government have denied people, that causes mental health exceptionalities. Dr. Sereda pointed out that organic mental health exceptionalities such as schizophrenia account for 5%, whereas these mental health exceptionalities have been brought upon by the conditions that have been created—deliberately created—by provincial disinvestment.

Also, I'd like to echo the voices of many of the dedicated harm reduction workers who we had the opportunity to meet on that day, who have indicated that harm reduction workers can't afford rent and groceries because they are not being paid nearly enough. The people who are providing services to our most vulnerable can't afford to look after themselves. They're in jobs that don't pay enough. They don't have pensions. They don't have benefits. So once people find themselves trained within these positions, they have to leave for something else, even though their heart might be in that role.

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If we take a look at an economic development lens towards this budget, we also need to consider that many different organizations and different global companies consider Ontario as a wise place to invest because of our public health care. They know that they are going to have a workforce that will be healthy, that will be looked after if they become injured, if they become ill. And yet, this government chooses to disinvest from health care and continues to privatize, making it on the path towards the United States. We cannot compete with the United States in terms of their fiscal opportunities, so we have to look at the things that make Ontario unique, look at the things that make Ontario desirable—and that is our publicly funded and publicly delivered health care.

Furthermore, through education—education is an investment, not a cost. We need to make sure that we have students who are trained and understand the importance of the skilled trades, not simply in high school, but also in elementary school. Let's remember that it was a Conservative government that removed shop classes and home economics classes from elementary school. Sometimes high school is too late. We need to give students that opportunity as soon as possible. Put shop classes back in elementary school.

As well, we look at Ontario as a viable place for investment because of the trust that Ontario has built as a partner. We've seen volatility from this government. We've seen bizarre statements. We've seen things that do not hold up to fact, like the claims that the greenbelt is a myth. We see these strange, bizarre performances. That undermines trust in Ontario as a place to invest.

We have also seen a culture of unfairness. We see a culture that does not recognize the importance of honest competition. We see favours for insiders. There was the 407, OLG. We've seen Tarion turn into yet another agency, HCRA, which is not working. This government talked,

when they were in opposition, about how they would reform Tarion; they have chosen not to. We also see the favours that are being done right now for Therme, a private spa that has a lease that this government won't release. We also see government appointments—we know that in these hallowed halls, many people who used to be Conservative candidates are now walking these halls in paid positions. Is that a culture of competition? Is that a culture of “Did that the person with the greatest experience and aptitude gets the position?” I'm not certain about that. I also would like to ask who's benefiting from all of the housing decisions that this government has made, with the parcelling off and the sale of the greenbelt. That's not a culture of fair competition.

Also, as we look towards some of the things that this government has done, they have not made the investments that we heard about, like making sure that nurse practitioners are able to practise across the province. They will alleviate some of the strains on our health care in the north—but across the province.

We also see a lack of investment in housing. Speaker, \$124 million was cut from municipalities—and then they're re-announcing \$202 million, but that's nowhere near enough to address the crisis. Housing is health care.

Furthermore, this government would pat itself on the back for the paltry 5% increase to ODSP and the fact that they've indexed legislated poverty. Congratulations. You're going to keep people in poverty for many years to come. That's not a success.

The 5% raise to CMHA was not the 8% that they requested.

I'd like this government to understand the importance of upstream investment, the importance of looking at all of their decisions with a cost-benefit analysis. And for heaven's sake, look at the return on investment.

We need to make sure across this province that there's wage parity among sectors. Whether it is in the community support services, home care, long-term care, as well as acute care, people should be paid accordingly; they should be paid appropriately. People should not be jumping between sectors because they can't afford to pay the bills.

Furthermore, this overreliance on agency nurses is fiscally imprudent. It's not fair to our health care system, it's further privatization and it's not effective use of the public purse. The party is over. Please stop. Please make sure that you're making financial decisions which benefit all of Ontarians, not the insiders who are in the backrooms. Make sure that you're investing in people. Invest in health care. Invest in home care. Invest in long-term care. Invest in education.

Last but not least, the opportunity to re-establish rent control, as recommended by so many stakeholders, is not found in this budget. We saw that autism was not mentioned once and we saw that school violence—an epidemic in our schools right now—was not mentioned once.

To this government: You can do better. I know you can do better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: This budget, I submit, this Bill 85 and the proposals contained within it, is saying yes

to record investments in public education and yes to record investments in health care, while at the same time establishing a transparent path to balance. Why will the opposition and why will the member opposite not say yes to this budget? Why is this official opposition again saying no to growth, prosperity and record investments in public services?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: To the member: This government, through their budget, has calculated disinvestment in many sectors. They've said no to students. This government has said no to hospices. This government has said no to wage parity. This government has said no to paid sick days. This government has said no to families of children with autism. They have said no again and again and again. They have chosen to ignore many of the issues that families face across this province, and it is glaringly apparent. The fact that autism doesn't show up once and that school violence doesn't show up once in this budget should really be a concern. It is, in fact, a message to all of those families who have these concerns. The fact that seniors right now are being evicted from their properties through renovictions that this government refuses to stand up for should be a concern to us all. That is a crisis, and this government has chosen not to support those seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Sarah Jama: Thank you to my colleague from London North Centre for his contribution to this debate. My question would be this: It's very clear from what you've talked about that this budget is set up in a way that's disabling. People are sick; people can't afford health care; people can't afford places to live. That, in and of itself, is creating conditions where people will continue to be disabled simply by existing. What would creating a caring budget, based on a caring economy, look like to you?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member from Hamilton Centre for an excellent question. Whether you consider the built environment or the policy environment, it is created to deliberately include or deliberately exclude. Some of the things that the official opposition stands for would be to double social assistance rates to make sure that people are above the poverty line and will remain above the poverty line so that they can buy healthy food, so that they can have a safe life.

We also stand for wage parity so that people working within community support services—home care and long-term care—are paid as much as workers in acute care. It costs less for seniors to remain in their homes than it does to institutionalize them. It was proven by the community support services who presented at committee. A 2020 study estimated it costs \$103 per day for a long-term-care-equivalent person at home in community care. It costs \$201 for a person in long-term care and \$730 per day in the hospital. That is cost savings and a wise fiscal investment. Make sure seniors can stay at home, where they're healthier and happier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member opposite for their remarks. In this budget, our government is supporting mental health by supporting a full continuum of

care for first responders experiencing PTSD. We're providing an additional \$425 million over three years to connect more people with mental health and addictions support. We're increasing investments in education to historic levels and have increased spending on mental health in schools by more than 500% since our government took office in 2018.

1010

My question: Will the member opposite support our government's initiatives to support our first responders and our students' mental health?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the government for recognizing the issue of PTSD. It is one that the official opposition championed. Unfortunately, the government, at the time, left out nurses as individuals who suffer from PTSD, which is shocking. However, I think it is good that the government increased the amount the CMHA was asking for, but they only gave them 5% when they were asking for 8%.

The member from Burlington talks about mental health supports in schools. Let's talk about more than just the curriculum. Let's make sure that there are social service workers accessible to students when and where they need them, because unfortunately, that is not the case in schools across Ontario. We know school violence is at an all-time high. This government has chosen to disregard that, to ignore it. We hear presenters time and again feel as though this government was deliberately ignoring education and deliberately cutting and underfunding the public education system in favour of private schools.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member from London North Centre. I want to read in part a letter that was sent to the Premier from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO. It's signed by some of the front-line service providers in our community: the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs among others.

It says, "Dear Premier Ford,

"Homelessness is a crisis in every part of Ontario." They ask that the Premier "acknowledge that homelessness in Ontario is a social, economic and health crisis" and they ask the Premier to "commit to ending homelessness in Ontario" and "work with a broad range of municipal, community, health, Indigenous and economic partners." They end by saying, "You have the opportunity and the resources to end homelessness in Ontario. We are here to help you succeed."

Can you explain why you think, when they developed this budget, they ignored this letter from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for an excellent question. You're absolutely right; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario did present at committee, and quite frankly, they delivered a scathing letter to this government, like I've never seen before. They recommended many things. They recommended increasing social assistance rates and to increase the supply of deeply affordable housing, to treat municipalities as partners, not in an antagonistic relationship such as they have.

In Kingston, we saw that the municipality there invested \$18 million per year in wraparound supports. That's something that should be supported across the province by this government—but, further, making sure that there's investments in other mental health supports and other supports that this government talks about but doesn't invest in.

Ms. Laura Smith: Point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order.

Ms. Laura Smith: Just a quick note: I wish to correct the record. Earlier, when I was responding, I said, in 2018, employment in manufacturing sectors declined. I wish to amend that to "by 2018, employment in Ontario manufacturing sectors declined."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member opposite for his remarks. The member used the word "investment," and I agree with that investment. Certainly, this government agrees with that approach. That's why the Ministry of Economic Development has been so incredibly active in all the investment opportunities here in Ontario—\$25 billion in the electric vehicle industry.

You mentioned investment in terms of numbers, and I come back to one of my favourite pages in the budget, page 139, where we look at health care spending, which increases \$15.3 billion over the next three years from the previous, including \$1 billion extra in home care, with education increasing as well. Wouldn't the member agree that those are very substantial investments in health care and in Ontario?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to consider the words of our recently not-re-hired Financial Accountability Officer, Mr. Peter Weltman, who really shone a light on this government's disinvestment—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs. Robin Martin: Recently, I had the pleasure of hosting my fifth annual Eglinton–Lawrence volunteer awards ceremony. Eglinton–Lawrence is home to hundreds of volunteers across countless groups and associations, all of which make invaluable contributions to our riding. Often these wonderful volunteers work quietly, providing support to their neighbours without any public or official recognition, and frankly, with these wonderful stories of community building and selfless support going untold.

I can firmly say that this is my favourite event of the year every year. The best part for me—and for those who attend, I think—is not just the recognition that the volunteers receive personally, although that's appreciated, but also the feeling of goodwill and community that comes

to everyone in attendance from knowing about these selfless contributions to our community. I believe that everyone leaves this event inspired and motivated to contribute more to our community.

This year, over 130 people from more than 20 organizations received an award based on their inspiring work and dedication to our community. I wish I could list them all here, but let me say they range from religious organizations and school councils to non-profits, business improvement area boards and others. All nominees reflect the spirit of community service in Eglinton–Lawrence and show that we can find a meaningful way to make a difference, to get involved in our communities.

I would again like to extend my congratulations to all of the award winners for the 2023 Eglinton–Lawrence volunteer awards.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The Northern Policy Institute and Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association each opened their recent events with an address by Anishinaabeg Elder Marlene Pierre. Dr. Pierre spoke of our responsibilities as leaders to respect the land, respect our roles as treaty partners and build right relations amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. These are two major northwestern Ontario organizations putting their commitment to build right relations front and centre.

Unfortunately, last week, we witnessed a much older, discredited approach to relations with First Nations. Every single First Nation in Ontario strongly objected to the building mines faster act, yet the Ford government pushed it through anyway, claiming they know better than First Nations peoples themselves what is good for them. But isn't this the same attitude that led to the violent removal of children from their families and the deaths of so many children at residential schools? And hasn't the Conservative government thus guaranteed years of business instability and conflict?

By taking the time to build good relations, Biigtigong Nishnaabeg, the town of Marathon and Generation Mining have shown the way to creating mutually beneficial projects that protect the land, water and traditional economies and guarantee land remediation. Bulldozer politics will always lead to conflict, but if we put building right relations first, good jobs and a protected environment are possible.

Meegwetch. Merci. Thank you.

HALTON REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE CRAM-A-CRUISER FOOD DRIVE

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Recently, I had the pleasure of joining Halton regional police constables Robert Del Villar and Kevin Bochsler, who are here today in the gallery, at the Cram-a-Cruiser event in my riding. We spent a rainy Saturday morning helping officers fill seven police cruisers with food at the Aldershot Fortinos.

The Halton regional police host various Cram-a-Cruiser events across the region to help those in need by filling up police cruisers with non-perishable food items. The next

Cram-a-Cruiser event in Burlington will take place on June 3.

This year, they crammed cruisers in support of the Burlington Food Bank. Volunteers filled cruisers with much-needed food like soup, coffee, canned fruit and vegetables. With the help of the community, they were able to raise approximately \$1,150 and 950 pounds of food, which will go a long way to support the Burlington Food Bank and the needs of our community.

We all need to pitch in and give back. It warmed my heart to see the community come together to support the people of Burlington. I would like to thank the heroic law enforcement officers of the Halton regional police, Fortinos, Robin Bailey from the Burlington Food Bank, Constables Del Villar and Bochsler, and everyone who donated, volunteered and contributed to the Cram-a-Cruiser event to help those in need.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Sarah Jama: Today I want to spend some time celebrating local organizing wins in the Hamilton community. Two days ago, six ACORN Hamilton members—Stewart Klazinga, Damien Ash, Christine Neale, Arnim Hughes, Marnie Schurter and Liz Scott—alongside the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Hamilton Community Benefits Network, the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction and the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic delegated to the public health committee and successfully called on the city of Hamilton to protect tenants in extreme heat.

1020

ACORN launched their extreme-heat campaign in September 2022, and due to their advocacy, a motion passed unanimously at public health which states that the staff in the licensing and bylaw division should prepare an information report for 2023 identifying 2024 priorities and timelines for the development of a maximum-heat bylaw. I'm happy to share that this motion passed with unanimous support from the public health committee, and I look forward to seeing Hamilton be the first city in Ontario to implement a maximum heat bylaw, hopefully by 2024.

MUKTI FOUNDATION

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to highlight the noble work of the Mukti Foundation in Brampton, an organization founded and led by seniors whose main goal is helping grieving families move on with respect and dignity. This organization strives to help reduce the stress these families face with the loss of a loved one by helping to alleviate the financial burden.

Each time a member unfortunately passes away, the organization collects a matching donation amount from each member, and these funds are put towards the funeral and commission costs. Their goal is to ensure that every member is honored and remembered with respect, empathy and kindness, and that their loved ones are supported throughout the grieving process.

Speaker, great community-led initiatives like the Mukti Foundation are truly inspirational, and I want to express my sincere gratitude to the founders.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND BIPHOBIA

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Today is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. This day feels especially important, as we've seen a rise of hate towards the 2SLGBTQI+ community right here in Ontario. Drag shows are being targeted by extremists who spread homophobic and transphobic lies. This happened right here in Toronto, at Toronto public libraries.

Yesterday, I met a teacher who was at the York Catholic District School Board meeting. She described that divisive meeting as traumatic for students and staff who were there to speak about the importance of raising the rainbow flag. Queer and trans families are feeling unsafe in a whole new way. A parent told me that they were being targeted, then reported to the children's aid society, and then doxxed online just for affirming their trans child's gender.

Government members have said everyone deserves the right to feel safe; the government can do more than just talk. They can act by passing my bill, the Keeping 2SLGBTQI+ Communities Safe Act.

Through all this hardship, my community remains resilient, strong, and full of hope and joy. This is evident in the work of the ArQuives, the largest queer and trans archives in the world, located in my riding of Toronto Centre. This year the ArQuives are celebrating their 50th anniversary, and their work to preserve our history is more important than ever before.

Finally, June, Pride Month, is fast approaching. Let's work together to support the queer and trans communities across Ontario. Let's show them that this House has their back and they can count on every single one of us for support.

BRUCE-GREY-OWEN SOUND CONSTITUENCY OFFICE

Mr. Rick Byers: Members, 16 days ago, on May 1, it was moving day in Owen Sound. As MPP during the past year, and for Bill Walker, our great past member, we've been at 9th Street and 1st Avenue West in downtown Owen Sound. It has been a great location for the office, as Owen Sound is the geographic centre of our big riding, which goes up to Tobermory in the north and down to Hanover and Dundalk in the south—as members know, of course, Dundalk is the bee-swallowing capital of Ontario.

The office has now moved to the Greystone, a newly renovated building on 8th Street, also in downtown Owen Sound. It has a great layout and lots of parking. I say this not only to let you know, because you're all welcome to visit, but more importantly, to acknowledge and thank the great team who made it happen. Moving, whether it's your home or your office, is a big load of hard work. In this

case, with the newly renovated space, it went from planning and managing the layout, to technology and safety support, and then to the move itself. Happily, everything made it in one piece.

I want to sincerely thank Karen MacInnis, Lisa LaPierre and Julie Blake, the great Owen Sound team for all your hard work in getting it done and for the great support of Anetes Anton here in Toronto.

Colleagues, this is just one example of all the hard work our teams do to help us in our jobs. Whether it's moving, answering calls or managing issues, we are all lucky to have this great support. Thank you so much.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I rise today on behalf of Ontarians living in rural communities, who lag behind provincial averages in quality of health and health care. Across Ontario, we have seen a real problem, intensified by COVID-19, such as a shortage of nurses, family doctors and other health care workers. We've seen the toll it has taken on people's faith in Ontario's health care system.

To see the Minden hospital shut its doors is just another example of this Conservative government's health care crisis. Closed emergency facilities and an absence of medical support services are a reality through many of our rural communities.

Dr. Paul Zalan recently wrote in Minden's newspaper, *The Highlander*, "Closing an emergency department causes more than inconvenience. In case of a stroke, heart attack, embolism ... every minute counts. Interceding quickly is crucial for recovery. Delay results in death or permanent disability."

Outraged by the lack of planning and consultation, residents brought a petition calling for a moratorium on the closure, with over 17,000 signatures.

As the summer season begins, Minden's population triples, with cottagers, kids attending camp and other tourists. The new Haliburton plan has not yet filled its doctor shifts for the summer, while the Minden hospital had its schedule filled until September 2023. Community members are seeking full transparency on the decision-making process and access to the transition plan. They need to know the impact of closing the hospital on vulnerable populations, health care staff and regional growth.

If this government cannot keep Minden hospital open, it's a signal that they have given up on rural health care. The people of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

PETERBOROUGH-KAWARTHA MAPLE SYRUP

Mr. Dave Smith: Many times over the last five years, I have referred to my riding as God's country, and for good reason. We have so much to offer, not only to the province of Ontario but all of Canada, not the least of which is the sweet maple syrup that we produce.

In my opinion, some of the best maple syrup in all of Canada comes from the townships that surround the city of Peterborough. And Speaker, my team and I have decided that we should be celebrating all that great maple syrup. Just last Saturday, we held our first pancake breakfast in Apsley, featuring maple syrup from North Kawartha. This Saturday, we'll be at the Isabel Morris Park in Lakefield for our next free pancake breakfast, where residents can sample that sweet breakfast nectar from 8 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. On Saturday, May 27, we'll be at the Curve Lake community centre serving up pancakes and maple syrup. And then on Sunday, May 28, we take our pancake road show down Highway 7 to Havelock, where you can sample syrup from 8 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. at the Havelock Lions centre, also known as the Havelock arena. We'll wrap things up on Saturday, June 10, in my home township of Douro-Dummer at the Warsaw arena, from 8 a.m. until 10:30 a.m.

I'd like to invite everyone to come on out to one of our pancake breakfasts to sample the great nectar from eight different local producers.

YORK REGIONAL POLICE APPRECIATION NIGHT

Mrs. Daisy Wai: This past week, I had the privilege of attending the York Regional Police Appreciation Night, where our community gathered to honour and recognize their outstanding contributions. I have a personal connection to law enforcement, as I proudly served as a member of the York Regional Police Services Board in 2005.

While we celebrated their accomplishments, our joy was overshadowed by the devastating news of the tragic loss of OPP Sergeant Eric Mueller. At only 42 years old and a father of two, he was fatally shot while responding to a disturbance. Our hearts go out to his grieving family, as well as to the two other OPP officers who were injured in the ambush. We will never forget their bravery and sacrifice.

In expressing our gratitude, we must not forget the invaluable support provided by the families and loved ones of our officers. They understand the challenges and uncertainties that come with this profession.

1030

As we observe Ontario Police Week from May 14 to May 20, let us focus on raising awareness and recognizing the exceptional work of our police services. May God bless and protect them as they continue their noble service to this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Barrie–Innisfil has a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to

wear buttons in recognition of May being Jewish Heritage Month in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Khanjin is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear buttons in recognition of May being Jewish Heritage Month in Canada. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that we have a former member visiting us today, the member for Welland in the 41st and 42nd Parliaments, Cindy Forster. Welcome back to the Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I too would like to welcome my friend and mentor Cindy Forster to the Legislature today, as well as the parents of my page, Randall Marsh, Scott and Deanna Marsh, as well as Laken and Marilyn are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I would like to welcome the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors, OAND, to Queen's Park today. This year, May 14 to May 20 marks Naturopathic Medicine Week, and the OAND members will be meeting with MPPs throughout the day today, as well as hosting a reception in rooms 228 and 230 from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. I encourage all MPPs to attend to celebrate Naturopathic Medicine Week.

Ms. Marit Stiles: On behalf of the official opposition, I want to welcome guests from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, who are here today for their annual advocacy. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to seeing you at your noon reception.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to follow the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs to Queen's Park today. There will be a reception in room 228 immediately after question period. I want to acknowledge the chair, my friend Barbara Bank; Noah Shack, the vice president; and Zehavi Zynoberg, the director of government relations, and also two amazing Ontarians who will be joining us at the reception, great philanthropists Rochelle Zubcov and her husband Mark Albert.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome CIJA to the House today and thank my friends Noah Tepperman and Jeff Arbus for our meeting this morning.

I would be remiss not to also welcome my dearest friend Cindy Forster back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, page captain Leonard Hobbs is from Oxford, as you now, but his grandparents, Marian and Jim Hobbs, who are here today are from the most beautiful riding of Markham–Stouffville.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Christine Charnock, who is the CEO of the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors; Dr. Cyndi Gilbert, who is the board chair of the association as well as a member of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine; and Dr. Jessica Carfagnini, who is practising in Thunder Bay. Welcome to Queen's Park, ladies.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would like to welcome special assistants from my constituency office, Morris Maron and Micah Dodo. They will be assisting at the CIJA reception at noon today.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome Dr. Ailya Patel from the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors; as well as Dr. Jessica Carfagnini, who practises in Thunder Bay; and Dr. Shawn Yakimovich. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: From my riding of Burlington, I'd like to introduce Johanna Chevalier. With Johanna today are Meera Mahadeo, Victoria Sewell, Shawn Cruz and Jignasha Gohil.

Also joining us today in the members' gallery from the Halton Regional Police Service are Constables Robert Del Villar and Kevin Bochsler.

Miss Monique Taylor: I also have some other guests joining us today from OPSEU and BPS Corrections. We have Jim Reilly, Joe Davies, David Farrugia, Jeff Tynes and Jonathan Guider. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I, too, would like to welcome the members of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs to Queen's Park today. I appreciate your great counsel. I'm looking forward to our meeting.

I also just realized that page Frederick Funk's parents, Justin and Elisha, are in the gallery, from Guelph, as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to take the opportunity to welcome my new legislative assistant, Caleb Samuels. He's in the gallery today. He volunteered with me in 2018 and 2022, and he was part-time with us in the office. He just graduated last month, and I welcome him to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Unless there is an objection, I'm going to continue.

Member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In addition to welcoming Cindy Forster to Queen's Park today, we also want to wish her a happy birthday.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I would like to welcome a constituent from Innisfil, Dr. Gudrun Welder. She's here with the association of naturopathic doctors. Welcome.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, we learned of the latest lawsuit brought by Crosslinx, the P3 partner for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. It's another day, another lawsuit. In fact, since this government took office, Metrolinx has paid out more than half a billion dollars to settle lawsuits brought by Crosslinx.

Liberals and Conservatives always say that the whole point of public-private partnerships is supposedly to avoid cost overruns and risks to the public, but the Eglinton

Crosstown P3 has been a total fiasco for the public, for small businesses, for Ontario.

How much more will the public be forced to pay before this government accepts that P3s are riskier, take longer and cost more than publicly procured projects?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Let me say to the Leader of the Opposition we share her frustration with the delays with the Eglinton Crosstown. The litigation that was announced yesterday is another delay tactic by CTS, which is completely unacceptable.

People who live along Eglinton and businesses who are there have suffered greatly. But our government is focused on making sure the Eglinton Crosstown opens as quickly as possible but when it opens, that it is safe for transit riders.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: Our government has been looking out for taxpayers since day one. That's why when we brought forward our plans for subways for the GTA, we introduced legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, to make sure we can get shovels in the ground faster, which reduces delays and also helps control costs. But the Leader of the Opposition and her party voted against our plan. They voted against building transit faster. We're going to get it done for the people of Ontario, and we're going to stand up for transit riders and taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: This government has been in power for five years. It's time they started taking responsibility for what's happening under their government.

In her 2018 report, the Auditor General said Metrolinx should not have paid Crosslinx \$237 million to settle its first lawsuit. But Metrolinx did pay. Then Crosslinx sued again. And Metrolinx paid again. And, now, Crosslinx has sued again. Not only that, the P3 project has been delayed until 2024 at the earliest.

Back to the Premier: How many lawsuits and how many delays will it take before this government abandons its costly and risky obsession with P3s?

1040

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: In addition to the well-known ideological opposition the NDP have toward building housing, they're also opposed to building transit. They will find every excuse to not build transit. That's why they voted against our subway plan. Even though they get up in this House every day asking for more transit, they vote against it when they have the chance.

We put forward a plan to address the transit deficit that we inherited from the Liberals, and they voted against it. They voted against building transit faster, which is actually hard to believe given the challenges that we are facing with the Eglinton Crosstown.

The legislation we've brought forward—the purpose of that is to address the mistakes of the previous Liberal government when they signed the contract in 2011 with Crosslinx. This is a contract we have inherited. We take responsibility for making sure that we get this done, but when we

do that, we commit to the people of Ontario. We're going to get it done and it is going to be safe for transit riders when it does open.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, let's talk ideology, because this is a government that continues down a terrible road purely based on ideology, and it's not working.

Yesterday, the Minister of Transportation said she had learned the lessons of the P3 failures of the previous Liberal government, but the only lesson that she seems to have learned is how to funnel more public money to private P3 contractors. Her subway P3s now cost \$1 billion per kilometre, nearly three times what Toronto's publicly procured Spadina subway extension cost just six years ago.

In 2018, the UK government abandoned P3s after years of costly fiascos. Why won't the Premier do the same instead of doubling down on Liberal P3 failures?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Let me be clear. The previous Liberal government signed the contract with CTS, and the Ontario taxpayer has paid billions of dollars for the Eglinton Crosstown. Our government is committed to making sure that CTS delivers us a credible schedule which will then lead to an opening date, which the people across Toronto have been waiting for for a very, very long time.

We have learned the lessons that the Liberals should have learned when they were in power. We have taken those lessons and we've put them in a piece of legislation. We put them as part of our subway plan for the GTA, but the members opposite voted against it. They would rather the people of the GTA sit on congested roads as opposed to building and riding on new subways and extended lines. That is unacceptable for the people of Toronto.

We're committed to getting it done. We're standing up for transit riders, and we're standing up for taxpayers.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My next question is again to the Premier. Yesterday, an FAO report on women's participation in the labour market found no progress on addressing the gender wage gap over the past decade, with women earning just 87 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2022. Instead of efforts to close the wage gap, the government has chosen to widen it. They would prefer to spend money taking nurses and midwives and teachers to court rather than pay them a fair wage.

Will the Premier stop fighting to keep women's wages down and end his efforts to legislate a gendered wage gap in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: The FAO report is actually saying we've done significant work and are seeing more women entering into the workforce because of the actions of this government, such as investing millions in seeing women get skills and development training, education, encouraging women and investing in women entering into the trades, where there is pay equity. We've seen significant investments in better jobs to cover expenses, including child care, tuition, transportation, for short-term training programs and micro-credentials. We've expanded the Investing in Women's Futures Program and the Women's Economic Security Program. Millions are going into the budget that we hope the members opposite will support.

In fact, the FAO actually says, "In 2022, labour participation rates for Ontario core-age mothers reached 81.7 per cent—the highest on record since 1976." That is increasing.

We're going to continue to make these investments, Mr. Speaker, because we are shortening the wage gap. We are—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister's creative interpretation of the report notwithstanding, this government continues to show just how completely out of touch they are with the reality that women in our province are facing. We are in an affordability crisis and women are paying a much bigger price. When you have one income and you have kids at home, you cannot afford the skyrocketing cost of housing and groceries with 87 cents on the dollar.

This government fumbled the implementation of affordable child care in this province, stalling an estimated 96,600 women from entering the labour force.

I want to go back to the Premier again, who is sitting right there in front of me and could be answering this question for the women of this province. The FAO says that we will be short 220,000 child care spaces to meet the demand. Is he just going to keep kicking this can down the road?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: We have secured a significant investment and agreement for child care, the largest across any other province. If we listened to the members opposite, we would have settled only for \$10 billion. We have \$13.5 billion for the child care agreement act, and with an increase of 86,000 new child care spaces by 2026—everything the members opposite keep saying no to, and actually hurting women from getting into the marketplace and working.

I've gone across the province, Mr. Speaker. I've met with hundreds of women who are getting into the workforce, taking advantage of the programs and investments this government has made. I just wonder of if the members opposite are going to support the budget that's coming up, plus the millions of dollars in investments.

The mining agreement: There are women getting into these sectors in droves, and we're going to work hard to make sure they stay here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: I would remind the members opposite that early childhood educators in this province are leaving faster than we can hire the. Because let's get this straight, as long as we treat ECEs like their work isn't as important as everybody else's, we're not going to be filling those jobs and we won't be bringing more women back into the labour force.

Speaker, almost a quarter of working women are in part-time jobs. That's nearly double the number of men. We are only a third of senior management and middle management roles, and that wage gap is persisting in every single sector.

For the Premier, 87 cents on the dollar would amount to about a \$27,000 pay cut for him, Does he really think that that's fair, and would he accept that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

To respond for the government, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we didn't sign any deal with the federal government; we signed a better deal for the people of this province: a billion additional dollars, an additional year of funding guarantee that no province had. It is this Premier that did what the NDP and Liberals couldn't do for 15 years, which is reduce child care fees for generations to come—a 50% reduction. Mr. Speaker, we are literally talking about \$10,000 to \$12,000 per child per year, and we're going to go even further to \$10 by year 2025.

The Associate Minister of Women's Economic and Social Opportunity is leading by example, ensuring that more women are working in our economy, with the recognition we can do more. We're cutting taxes. We're ensuring women in the skilled trades. We're ensuring more young girls get into STEM disciplines within our schools.

If the members opposite want to stand up for labour and market participation for women, vote for our budget. Vote for opportunity. Vote for a plan that makes life affordable for moms and dads across Ontario.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. With over 600,000 people and 120 wells in Kitchener-Waterloo, this is the largest community in Canada dependent on groundwater for a majority of its drinking water. We've known for decades that the aquifer providing this water is particularly vulnerable to contamination.

The Grand River Conservation Authority has been key to protecting this vital resource while supporting growth and housing. Bill 23 drastically reduces the powers of conservation authorities to protect our water.

Why does this government believe that it makes sense to increase the risk that the region of Waterloo's water sources become contaminated? Why are you gambling with source water protection in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

To respond for the government, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

1050

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, we were crystal clear with Bill 23, including ensuring that the environment is protected but, at the same time, we're going to build much-needed homes. We're in the middle of a housing crisis and New Democrats seem to not want to acknowledge that. They don't want to acknowledge that there are young people that are living in Waterloo region today that can't realize the dream of home ownership. There are seniors who want to downsize but don't have a home that meets their needs and their budget at their disposal.

This is the impetus for why we took this plan to the people last June. We got a significant mandate under the leadership of Premier Ford. We are going to build housing and we are going to provide hope and opportunity for newcomers to our province, for seniors and for young families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The region of Waterloo passed amendments to build 121,000 additional homes before Bill 23 passed. This government claims they had to strip away the powers of conservation authorities to protect our water to get new homes built, but this does not hold up to scrutiny. The region of Waterloo was already leading.

We know what happens when water isn't protected in Waterloo region. Elmira's water sources are still too contaminated to drink and may never be restored after years of weak regulation. Concerns have come from many other regions in addition. The 113 Ontario municipalities within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative have been examining the impact of Bill 23 and they are raising legitimate concerns.

When will this government put people and the water that they rely on as a priority ahead of your personal private interests?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, do you know whose interest I'm standing up with? It's the mayors of the communities in Waterloo region that have signed on to our housing pledge and are our partners moving forward to ensure that we have those 1.5 million homes built by 2031. Every single mayor in those fastest-growing communities has signed on with us to move forward, so we're very, very happy with the mayors of Kitchener, Waterloo, the chair of Waterloo region—they've all come out publicly to acknowledge that we're in a housing crisis and they are our partners.

I want to celebrate and congratulate them, not talk down like the member for Waterloo does.

COMMUNITY SAFETY FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is for the Premier. With a growing wave of crime everywhere across Canada, communities are rightfully concerned. In Ontario, we're seeing a rise in crime in cities of all sizes and in our rural communities. Everyday, we see and hear new reports of serious crime throughout the province. These trends are disturbing and this is not acceptable. Everyone in Ontario deserves to be safe in their communities, including the police officers who respond to these calls to protect us. Our government must take urgent action now and explore all options to combat the surge in criminal activity.

Speaker, can the Premier please explain what actions our government is taking to make Ontario's communities safer?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the great member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington and I also want to thank him for being an OPP officer for years. We're so proud to have him down in the Legislature.

As we tackle the crime that we've seen around the province, we're making sure we're giving the police services across Ontario the tools that they need to get the job done; to make sure our communities are a lot safer; that you're able to walk out at night and you're able to take transit here in Toronto without worrying about being abused or physically hurt.

We're adding more recruits to the Ontario Police College every single year. We're investing another \$13 million—to fight guns and gangs—that will stop illegal drugs from coming into our province. We're cracking down on auto thefts, adding \$51 million in new measures to find and dismantle crime networks across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Trevor Jones: To all police officers across Ontario, please know that this government and the people of Ontario appreciate your hard work and dedication each and every day. When we call on our police officers to keep our communities safe, they're always there to respond and to serve. However, our front-line officers are regularly exposed to traumatic events while responding to calls that are increasingly complex and increasingly dangerous. All of this takes a toll on both their physical and mental health.

In the past, most officers attempted to cope with trauma on their own and without professional help. All police officers deserve to have access to the care and supports when they need it, where they need it.

Speaker, can the Premier please explain what action our government is taking to support the health and wellness of all our front-line officers?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the great member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington about showing respect for our police officers. What is unacceptable is when school boards are disallowing police officers in uniform to go in there with one of their kids. That's what's disgusting, Mr. Speaker. That's being changed, and thank goodness for that.

That's why in our budget we announced an additional \$9.6 million to support the Runnymede Healthcare Centre to provide mental health supports and PTSI treatment tailor-made for the unique needs of our police officers and front-line workers. We must always ensure that our dedicated first responders have the access to the highest quality of mental health and addictions care that meets their needs. We will always ensure the brave women and men that serve on our police forces are treated with dignity and respect.

NORTHERN EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le solliciteur général.

Speaker, this morning I was joined by northern MPPs to discuss the need for 911 everywhere in Ontario. Every year, families living and visiting northern Ontario discover in their times of need that after they dial 911, they get a recording that says, "This number is not in service. Please try your call again." In my riding, the police, the fire, the ambulance are available, but nobody knows the 1-800 numbers to reach them. When will Ontario do like every other province in Canada has done and make 911 available everywhere throughout our province?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member for the question. Our government takes our public safety very seriously. We've never had a government in my generation that is more concerned with the welfare of all Ontarians, and that's exactly why we're moving forward with our plans for next-generation 911.

As the member knows, we are committing over \$200 million to work with our local municipal jurisdictions so that they can implement in their jurisdictions the new technology. As the member knows, Mr. Speaker, the new technology will allow for unprecedented safety and security for all Ontarians. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we believe everyone has a right—an equal right—to live safely in their own communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary: the member for Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'm still waiting for that technology to arrive in Kiiwetinoong. It has almost been five years since this government received the Chief Coroner's report following four deaths linked to a failure of 911 in northern Ontario, but nothing has changed.

In Kiiwetinoong, the services for ambulance, the services for fire and the services for police range from minimal to non-existent. You cannot call 911 for services that do not exist. When will this government take real action to ensure everyone in Ontario who calls 911 gets the help that they need?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member for the question. Well, we are acting. That's exactly why we're providing the \$208 million supports for municipalities and for regions in the north so that they can begin the transition for next-generation 911. When the former government was in power for 15 years, they didn't move the needle. And I have to say, when that party was in power in

the early 1990s, they didn't realize that they had the same issues then with the dialing sequence in some regions that didn't have it. We want every region in Ontario to benefit from the next-generation 911, and this technology will allow an unprecedented level of safety. Mr. Speaker, we are not delaying; we are getting the job done.

1100

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Over the last five years, Ontario was garnering a reputation for its world-class manufacturing sector. Employing almost 800,000 workers, we are continuously investing and innovating to stay competitive and produce critical goods that the whole world relies on. That's why it's imperative for this government to take the right steps to attract investments that will grow the economy and create good jobs. Will the minister please highlight how our government is promoting Ontario's manufacturing sector and keeping it ahead of the competitive global curb?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We have reduced the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$8 billion every year. According to the latest federal report, Ontario is now the number one investment destination in all of Canada, and with our regional development programs we're ensuring that we remain that number one site.

Just last week, All Season Fencing announced a \$4-million investment into their Trenton manufacturing facility. Thank you, Minister Smith, for doing that. They manufacture sustainable PVC vinyl fencing that uses only recycled plastic. They are creating 19 jobs and acquiring new equipment in Trenton with a \$400,000-investment from the province. This adds to the \$1 billion in investments and over 1,800 jobs that companies like All Season Fencing have added to Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister for the answer and for that information about one of my new regional employers. The Regional Development Program has been a game-changer for manufacturing and job creation across the province, especially in our rural economies.

In 2018, our government knew it was long overdue that Ontario, once again, takes charge of its manufacturing sector after over a decade and a half of Liberal inaction that spurred the manufacturing exodus from the province.

This minister has mentioned a number of times that Ontario is now one of the most competitive places to invest and grow a business. Will the minister please explain what actions have led to Ontario holding this illustrious title?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Since 2018, Ontario businesses have added 660,000 new jobs. This is despite the fact the Liberals and the NDP voted against every bit of help we offered to those businesses. They watched, though, as we moved swiftly to eliminate 16,000 different red tape items. They watched as we lowered electricity rates and lowered

taxes that were strangling our businesses. Again, they watched as we re-shored thousands of jobs back to Ontario—the jobs that were sent running—yet they voted against every single measure we put forward to create jobs and make it more affordable for families and businesses.

They continue to vote against attracting billions in investment and making Ontario stronger. Speaker, we're going to keep Ontario competitive because we're open for business.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Over 100 residents in the town of Rossmore are being threatened with a blatant renoviction by their new corporate landlord, Bedford Properties. Resident Keith Maybe said this: "It's not humane what they have done. You've got people who have been in these apartments right from the time they were built 37 years ago. Some people are in their eighties and their nineties. It's not right."

Premier, what are you going to do to help these residents keep these homes?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Part of our commitment to Ontarians, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is that we're going to have a housing supply action plan tabled in the Legislature every year for the four years. We've got a bill before the House right now, Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, and we've been responsive to many of the tenant concerns and also the Ontario Human Rights Commission when it comes to air conditioning in units. Many of the recommendations that we put forward on that bill respond directly to some of the concerns that tenants have expressed to our government about renovations and landlord's own use.

Again, Speaker, the member keeps asking questions, but she never states on the record whether she's going to support our measures. I would really love her to do that today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: If these tenants are forced to leave their homes, odds are they won't be able to return, because Bill 97 does nothing to address the fact that Ontario's eviction laws are too weak to work. The reality is this: If a tenant is illegally evicted, they never get back into their home. The reality is also this: If a landlord illegally evicts a tenant, they almost never get a fine.

For the sake of these residents, can you say yes to our amendments in Bill 97 to strengthen Ontario's eviction protection laws?

Hon. Steve Clark: One of the best measures the government has done as part of our Bill 97 is the measures that the Attorney General has announced when it comes to the Landlord and Tenant Board: a historic \$6.5-million commitment to double the amount of adjudicators, to support them with additional staff members, to make sure that the access to justice is swift and is fair.

I think this is one of the premises that the Attorney General has taken throughout the pandemic, whether it be to stand up against illegal evictions when we were at our most vulnerable as a province—but this latest commitment, this record-setting commitment by the government to invest \$6.5 million in the Landlord and Tenant Board, will pay huge dividends to both landlords and tenants alike.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier.

There are 200,000 acres of greenfield land already approved for development in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Planners have shown that there are 1.4 million homes currently approved, in process or under construction and enough approved development land to build two million homes. It's clear that the only greenbelt scam is the government's scheme to pave over the farmland that feeds us and contributes \$50 billion to our food and farming economy, and the wetlands that protect us from flooding and clean our drinking water.

Instead of attacking the greenbelt, let's work together to remove the barriers to build homes in communities that people can afford, close to where they work. The Premier has a chance to support the farm economy and to make life affordable if he keeps his greenbelt promise. Will he keep that promise today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from “build nothing” riding, because that's what he believes in: building absolutely nothing. It's unheard of that the University of Guelph, on their property, tried to get housing and guess what? He didn't support it. He didn't support housing at the University of Guelph. He doesn't believe in building housing in Guelph. They have the lowest per capita housing starts in the entire province.

I find it ironic that he's coming up and trying to tell us how to build housing. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, we have 445,000 people who arrived in Ontario last year and they need homes. We're going to make sure that we hit our target of 1.5 million homes, and I just wish the MPP from Guelph would get on board and support our housing plan, because the people in his community are going to need homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: With all due respect to the Premier, if he would do a simple Google search of housing starts this year and look at the communities with those housing starts, Guelph is not last. As a matter of fact, Guelph has more housing starts than Peterborough right now. Sorry, my friend from Peterborough: Guelph has more housing starts than Peterborough right now.

If the Premier wants to work with me to build more homes, let's actually pass my Bills 44 and 45, which would get rid of exclusionary zoning so we can actually

build homes that people can afford in the communities they want to live in.

The government has an opportunity today to help people and municipalities save money, to defend our farm economy and to build affordable homes that people want to live in, in affordable communities close to where they work, if the government agrees to stop their expensive sprawl agenda and protect the greenbelt.

1110

Will the Premier keep his promise today and promise to protect the greenbelt?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I can't believe this member is quoting the report that he did, because what he failed to tell the House is the fact that the success of this report is because of the measures that our government is putting forward. Speaker, the report he quoted estimates that an additional 150,000 units are going to be created because of the as-of-right zoning changes that our government has put forward.

You voted against those changes for 150,000 homes.

The member is very selective. This report shows that 5% of those homes are built because of minister's zoning orders—again, something that member doesn't support.

The member needs to get his facts straight. The member needs to read the entire report—to show that many of the successes of these initiatives are directly because of the initiatives this government has done under the leadership of—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

The next question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

All workers in Ontario deserve a workplace that is safe. Strong workplace health and safety practices help to make workplaces more productive and reduce the risk of injury. No worker anywhere in our great province should have to go to work worried about harm to their health or safety. One worker not returning home at the end of the day is one too many. Improving safety for workers is a serious issue, and this must remain as a top priority for this minister and our government.

Can the minister please explain how our government is addressing safety for workers in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for this question and for her advocacy in keeping workers in her riding and across the province safe.

Speaker, our government, under our Premier, is leaving no stone unturned on our mission to make our workplaces the safest in the entire world. Ontario has one of the strongest safety records in North America, and that's

thanks to everyone—government, workers, labour leaders, and businesses—working together. But as long as workers are being injured on the job, our work isn't done.

That is why we announced today that we're investing an additional \$12.5 million into Ontario's six health and safety associations to improve training, expand their resources and save lives.

Speaker, we'll continue to invest in education, prevention and enforcement to ensure that every worker returns home safely to their families at the end of the day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's wonderful to hear about that funding.

I am pleased to hear that our government is continuing to lead the way in strengthening workplace health and safety measures. These valuable investments will help to ensure that our government and workplace partners are working together to eliminate injuries.

However, the sad reality is that last year, 64 workers in Ontario lost their dear lives on the job. We owe it to them and to their loved ones to do better.

Unfortunately, one of the leading causes of death on construction sites and in other workplaces is falls from heights. These injuries are devastating, and our government must do more to improve protections for workers.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to increase safety measures for workers in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member for this question.

Speaker, I can tell you, as Minister of Labour, that nothing is more important than the safety of workers. Hearing about fatalities is the most devastating thing that one can hear of every day. Every one of these workers had hopes, dreams and families of their own.

That is why today I announced that we're updating our "working at heights" course to better protect our workers. Working with labour leaders, workers and businesses, our new course will cover working safely on ladders, skylights and equipment, as well as the use of PPE. And because safety is never the cost of doing business, our Working for Workers Act 3 is proposing to increase our fines to the highest in the country. We're working hard every day under the leadership of this Premier to make Ontario work for everyone.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. We can all agree that good jobs mean a strong future. The official opposition, to that end, helped fast-track legislation to make sure that we got the VW deal done. It's entirely unclear who dropped the ball with Stellantis—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: —and the workers of this province deserve to see that deal honoured. Ontario is on the brink of a manufacturing revolution, and every day in

limbo could cause reputational damage. It could also cause this deal to fall apart.

My question: Will the Premier meet with the Prime Minister immediately, find out what's gone sideways, use every tool in the toolbox and get the Stellantis deal over the finish line?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, in the last two and a half years, this government has landed \$25 billion worth of electric vehicle and battery investments. All of that happened because we lowered the cost of business by \$8 billion a year.

Ontario has done a deal with Stellantis identical to the deal we did with Volkswagen—and I mean identical in every way—and we are honouring our commitment. We know the feds have made a commitment to Stellantis. In fact, in writing, five times they have committed to matching the production incentives of the United States; five times the feds have committed. We are urging the federal government to honour their commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary: the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: That's a very disappointing answer. Losing this Stellantis investment would mean losing thousands of good-paying unionized jobs in Windsor-Essex—jobs that feed families and support our local economy and charities.

We're now seeing a game of jurisdictional football. The Premier says it's all up to the federal government; the federal government says the province needs to step up too. My community needs and deserves governments at all levels to do everything in their power to not only protect current jobs but secure new ones. We need the Premier to take leadership and not just wait for someone else to save the day.

Speaker, will the Premier tell my community what specifically he'll do to support Windsor workers and ensure the Stellantis investment isn't lost? Will he step up?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply for the government, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: You know, it's pretty rich for the member from Windsor to say what she just said, when for 15 years you could shoot a cannon down the middle of the street in Windsor. Now Windsor is thriving.

Not only did the member not support it, she voted against it. She voted against every economic development opportunity down in Windsor. She voted against Stellantis. We're the ones who created the deal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West will come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: We're going to make sure that deal happens, on top of the \$25 billion of other deals. No matter if it's a battery manufacturer or an auto manufacturer, the member voted against it. They're anti-development, anti-housing, anti-building-highways. They're anti-building-

hospitals. They voted against the hospital in Windsor that we're building—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: This is about “no, no, no, no.” I think the cheese has slipped off the cracker with that member.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There are no points of order considered during question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Miss Monique Taylor: Jesus. The cheese has slipped off the cracker? Really? Coming from the 800-pound gorilla.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'm going to ask the House to come to order.

I'm going to remind the House that the debate is not enhanced, in any way, shape or form, by personal insults.

Interjection: Apologize.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Start the clock. The next question.

1120

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. David Smith: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Since the beginning of May, the Writers Guild of America has been on strike. This strike by the screenwriters is having an impact on film and television shows in the United States. It is a concern that the strike in America will have a negative impact on the film and television industry in Ontario. With many productions that are filmed in Toronto, we know that these projects help to support our economy.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us if the strike in America will affect the film and television industry in Ontario?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for the question and recognizing that that might be an issue, but last year, our domestic film and television productions were very strong, contributing over \$1.2 billion to Ontario's economy—an increase of 25% over the previous year. Our homegrown creativity, talent and self-reliance give us a measure of insulation from external factors like the US writers' strike.

But I have a little story, Speaker, and I won't make it long. About two weeks ago, I was at one of Ontario's outstanding world-class destinations for tourism—the ROM—at a reception. And on my way walking back later in the evening, there was quite a bit going on in the park outside, so I wandered over to see what was going on, and there were lights and so many people. It was production—

TV production—outside. Workers working, talent running around—watching it happen is pretty special—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The supplementary question.

Mr. David Smith: I thank the minister for his answer. It's good news to know that our local film and television industry is strong at this time. However, it is important to look to the future as well. It is great to hear that this industry helps with job creation and helps to grow Ontario's economy, but we need to make sure that this industry will continue to grow in the future.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us how our government is supporting more film and television production made in Ontario?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question. First-hand, lots of meetings have gone on in the last five or six months talking about production and talking about what's going on in our province, and it's an industry that's thriving, Mr. Speaker. We are supporting film and television, thanks to the leadership of our Premier and the Minister of Finance, with more than \$814 million budgeted towards three film and television tax credits for 2023.

This draws people to our province to do their productions, from the United States. This drives business, drives jobs—not talking about the talent, but the jobs, the careers, Mr. Speaker. It's not just getting someone in working for a day; it's long-term careers thanks to many of the people within our ministry—I'm sorry, in our—what do we call it? What do we call this thing? Our party? Yes. Our party drives jobs, Mr. Speaker, and the film industry is the beneficiary of it, as is television.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier.

The W. Sherwood Fox school council, along with more than 30 students and parents, sent a package of letters to the Thames Valley District School Board pleading for help. Daily violent incidents and code-yellow lockdowns, more frequent than ever before, have left students feeling scared and anxious about going to school. Parents feel desperate, and they worry every morning when they drop off their kids. Every student's learning is being disrupted, and the entire school community is being traumatized.

What specific actions will this government take now to deal with the alarming rise in violence at W. Sherwood Fox Public School in London and schools across this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We certainly share the concern of the rise of crime and violence taking place in communities across the country, and we're seeing impacts in our school communities, affecting staff and, of course, our kids.

It's why, from 2018—where I think many members opposite will speak to root causes—when it comes to mental health supports, pre- and post-pandemic, the Premier

and the government increased funding from \$18 million to \$114 million in student mental health, a 550% increase in support to help that school and every school afflicted by the rise of violence, behavioural issues and other concerns impacting kids. We've increased the amount of caring adults in the room. There are nearly 8,000 more staff, notwithstanding there's been a flat number of students within our schools. We've also enhanced the mental health literacy, mandatory learning—more people, more literacy, more curriculum and, of course, more mental health supports to keep students safe in their schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: W. Sherwood Fox desperately needs more EAs. It needs a funded sensory room. It needs regular, ongoing support from social workers, psychologists, OTs, school support counsellors, child and youth workers and others. But this school is not unique. This government's chronic underfunding of public education is failing Ontario students, especially students with special needs. The Thames Valley District School Board is spending \$5 million more on special ed than it is receiving while violence in school escalates and staff injuries increase.

Speaker, will this government commit today to provide the funding our schools need so they are safe for students, staff and parents?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We've increased staff by 8,000 more since we started; 2,000 additional teachers are being brought into schools this September specifically to boost literacy and math scores, because we believe, as Progressive Conservatives, we've got to get back to the basics to strengthen fluency in what actually matters in the classroom: reading, writing, math and STEM education, and more pathways to the skilled trades.

We've increased funding in mental health. The overall funding envelope in education is up for the coming September by \$690 million. The overall education budget, when you compare to the peak of spending under former Premier Wynne, is 27% higher.

I recognize fully that we're going to continue to do more. In every single budget, we'll increase funding. We'll continue to hire more people. And we'll continue to make the case, as a former school board trustee, that the school boards involved, everyone involved in public education, should be doing better, which is why I urge the members opposite, if they want a better school, they should vote for the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act to demand better for children in this province.

HEALTH CARE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is to the Minister of Colleges and Universities. All Ontarians deserve to have access to the health care they need when they need it no matter where they live. In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, my constituents are looking for connected care and services that are close to home, in Wheatley, in Leamington, Blenheim, Ridgetown and beyond. Unfortunately, because of the destructive policies of the past Liberal government, many parts of our province are in

desperate need of more health care professionals to provide that care. Our government must take decisive steps now to educate and retain more health care workers across the province to make immediate impacts in our local hospitals, long-term-care homes and other health care facilities.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to expand opportunities to educate more health care professionals?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the great question. Yesterday, alongside the Minister of Health, we announced that applications are now open for the much-anticipated Ontario Learn and Stay Grant. Months of hard work and dedication led up to what was a very successful launch of the program, with over 700 students applying to the Learn and Stay website within the first 24 hours. This is a win-win for both post-secondary students and underserved communities across the province. Not only does it offer a sizable financial contribution for students, it also has the power to make a significant impact in the local communities that need it most.

Speaker, it's clear that students are eager to begin their careers in nursing, and I'm confident our government's approach of offering financial support will make all the difference between someone considering a career in health care and someone who actually pursues it. This grant clearly demonstrates that, unlike previous governments, this government is taking concrete—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

1130

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's so encouraging to hear the grant application process is now open. This is welcome news to my constituents and for communities across Ontario. Financial supports available through this grant program are a positive step in building up this precious workforce. However, there are some regions in our province still in need of health care professionals, and that's more urgent. It's up to our government to implement solutions to respond to local health care needs.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how investments made by our government into the Learn and Stay grant will benefit communities that are currently underserved?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm happy to say that, starting this September, students from the member's riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington will be eligible to apply for the grant. This grant will touch every corner of the province and that includes ridings held by members of the opposition, with 49 eligible programs at institutions in those ridings currently included in the program.

Where, specifically, do you ask? Ottawa West-Nepean, Mushkegowuk-James Bay, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Thunder Bay-Superior North, Kiiwetinoong, Algoma-Manitoulin, Ottawa-Vanier, Windsor West, Kingston and the Islands, London North Centre and Sudbury. With a constituency week coming up, I hope that each of the members representing the ridings I just mentioned, as well as the other members, will continue to talk about this grant in their ridings, because Premier Ford and the PC government are delivering for their communities.

ASSISTED HOUSING

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The Galbraiths have been waiting for an assisted living space for their son since 2014. Imagine, day after day, year after year, writing letters and emails, making phone calls and hearing nothing but crickets.

Can the minister tell this family when they will be offered an assisted living space for their son?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the member for the question. What we have done in the ministry and across government is we have made sure that the services and the funds that the service providers need are there for them. One of the first things that we did when we formed government is we looked at some of the challenges that service providers were facing, which were the same ones that they had been facing 10, 15 years prior to us forming government. That wasn't good enough for us. What we said we were going to do is work with the service providers to make sure that the services that the children, youth and families are in need of are not only there, but there for families faster and in a way where they need it and in a way where it's expedited and processed faster.

We've been working directly with service providers to make sure that happens. We're making sure that the funds are there for the service providers and we'll make sure that the services and the supports the families rely on are there now and into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the supplementary question.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I learned today that adults with developmental disabilities have brought a class action suit against the government: "The complaint is about the negligent operation of a social assistance system that has approved the delivery of much-needed support and services but then fails to follow up."

Can the government tell us, really, when people can expect to have the services delivered? Eight years is far too long for a family to be waiting to receive supports.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. It wasn't right; it wasn't enough, which is why we're improving the system, which is why we increased funding, which is why we're working across government to make sure that the services that the families rely on are there. If you look at the programs that we have—for example, Journey to Belonging—which we have put forward, we are making sure that the services that people rely on are there for them when they need them, and that's by making sure that the funding that's required is there in place for them. That's just the way that we've been working since we've formed government.

We had to look at redesigning a system that was left neglected by the previous government. Unfortunately, throughout their time, your party supported them. You didn't do anything about it. It was this government that had to step in and fix the mistakes of the previous government and we're doing that. How are we doing it? In collaboration with service workers, by listening to families and by listening to those who need the services. We will not let them down in—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

The next question.

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Graham McGregor: My question is for Ontario's Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Women entrepreneurs are an integral part of Ontario's economy, accounting for nearly 20% of all small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario—and I'm very proud to consider that my mother, Lesley, is one of that 20%. Speaker, 20% is a big number, but I think all members of the House could agree that that number could be quite a bit higher.

The reality is that women continue to encounter social and economic barriers when it comes to starting and growing their businesses. While recent numbers show that there is an increase in overall employment for women, more must be done to increase opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Could the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to unlock even more economic opportunities for women?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Thank you to the great member for Brampton North. I look forward to being with the member next week. We'll have the opportunity to visit one of the recently announced expansion locations for the Investing in Women's Futures Program. This amazing program is expanding to 10 new locations across the province, and Brampton is receiving one of them.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard first-hand accounts from women of some of the unique and disproportionate economic barriers women face when starting, growing or scaling up their businesses. That's why our government is taking a multi-prong approach to unlock more opportunities for women in the post-pandemic economy. We are supporting women as they enter and re-enter the workforce with programs like the Investing in Women's Futures Program and the Women's Economic Security Program, and we're opening opportunities for women to pursue entrepreneurship as a flexible career path with the Regional Innovation Centre and Small Business Enterprise Centre networks. Because of this, women are breaking down barriers, growing their businesses, and getting it done for themselves, their families and Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Graham McGregor: A supplementary question for the minister—and this is Brampton to Brampton, so we need a straight answer.

There are over 370,000 jobs that are going unfilled in the skilled trades today, with one in three journeypersons over the age of 55, and many of them are heading towards retirement. Over the next decade, Ontario will need 100,000 workers in the construction sector alone to meet this growing demand.

The unfortunate reality is that women currently account for only 5% of the skilled trades workforce. Our government must act now to ensure that we address the labour shortage and help more women to pursue these in-demand, rewarding and well-paying careers.

Building a stronger Ontario means that we need more workers to help grow our businesses, our communities, and our economy.

Could the minister please explain how our government is expanding opportunities for women to pursue careers in the skilled trades?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Speaker, the member from Brampton North is absolutely right.

I'm telling you, I'm on a mission to get more women into the trades, because when you've got a trade, you've got a job for life, according to our Premier, and he's right too.

Our government is investing a historic \$1.5 billion over four years into the Skilled Trades Strategy. Many initiatives will support women and girls in exploring the skilled trades, like the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, the Pre-apprenticeship Training Program, and the Achievement Incentive Program. Thank you to our minister of—the long acronym. These investments enhance opportunities for girls and women to tour college trade programs, participate in workshops, and be mentored by female apprentices and journeypersons.

That's why I will continue to work alongside the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and with our partners in labour unions and businesses to change the skilled trades culture to ensure that women who enter the trades stay in the trades.

When women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader, I gather, has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to take a moment to wish the Minister of Red Tape Reduction a very happy birthday.

RECEPTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Thornhill has a point of order.

Ms. Laura Smith: Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind everybody about the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs reception that's happening in rooms 228 and 230 just following these proceedings.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton has a point of order, I gather.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just wanted to introduce a very special person from the city of Ottawa. A 21-year veteran of the Ottawa Police Service, deputy police chief Steve Bell, has joined us here in the Ontario Legislature today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to welcome Lorne Brooker, host of the Lorne Brooker Show on 800 CJBQ, and his very capable assistant, Jim Gibbs. I thank all of the members of the Legislature who joined us for his broadcast this morning in the government House leader's office. And thank you to the government House leader for letting us use your boardroom this morning.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Guelph has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning protecting the greenbelt. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Solicitor General concerning 911. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER), 2023

LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ÉDUCATION (ENSEMBLE DES TROUBLES CAUSÉS PAR L'ALCOOLISATION FOETALE)

Mr. Hsu moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act in relation to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) / Projet de loi 108, Loi concernant l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation foetale.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Ted Hsu: This bill, which was first introduced by my predecessor, the former MPP for Kingston and the Islands, Sophie Kiwala, and also introduced by the former Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, requires boards of education to develop policies and guidelines with respect

to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD. Teachers' colleges and early childhood education programs shall be required to provide training with respect to FASD.

LEAGUE TECHNIQUE INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Bowman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr22, An Act to revive League Technique Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

HANDS OFF THE GREENBELT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr. Schreiner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to impose limitations on the exercise of powers conferred by the Act / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure pour imposer des restrictions à l'exercice des pouvoirs conférés par la Loi.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member like to explain his bill?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm proud to introduce the Hands Off the Greenbelt Act, 2023. This bill amends the Greenbelt Act to restrict the minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council from removing land from the greenbelt area, removing land from the application of the greenbelt plan and removing a designation of land as protected countryside. These new restrictions apply retroactively as of December 13, 2022.

NO MORE HIGHWAYS IN THE GREENBELT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À EMPÊCHER L'EXPANSION DES AUTOROUTES DANS LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr. Schreiner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to provide for a prohibition on controlled-access highways in the Greenbelt Area and make related amendments / Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure pour prévoir une interdiction portant sur les routes à accès limité dans la zone de la ceinture de verdure et apporter des modifications connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to explain this bill?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm proud to introduce the No More Highways in the Greenbelt Act, 2023. This bill amends the Greenbelt Act to provide that the greenbelt

plan is deemed to prohibit, in all of the greenbelt area, the erection, location and use of buildings or structures for the purposes of any new controlled-access highways.

A consequential amendment is made to section 9 of the act which will restrict the minister from making an order under either that section or section 47 of the act that would have the effect of contravening the prohibition on controlled-access highways.

NO MORE PITS OR QUARRIES IN THE GREENBELT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À EMPÊCHER L'EXPANSION DES Puits D'EXTRACTION OU DES CARRIÈRES DANS LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr. Schreiner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to provide for a prohibition on pits and quarries in the Greenbelt Area and make related amendments / Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure pour prévoir une interdiction portant sur les puits d'extraction et les carrières dans la zone de la ceinture de verdure et pour apporter des modifications connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Guelph care to explain this bill?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm proud to bring forward the No More Pits or Quarries in the Greenbelt Act, 2023. This bill amends the Greenbelt Act to provide that the greenbelt plan is deemed to prohibit any person from applying for an aggregate permit to operate a new pit or quarry in the greenbelt area or expand an existing pit or quarry in the greenbelt area.

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Lorraine Rocheleau from Alba in my riding for this petition.

"911 Everywhere in Ontario...."

"Whereas when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911 for help; and

"Whereas access to emergency services through 911 is not available in all regions of Ontario but most Ontarians believe that it is; and

"Whereas many Ontarians have discovered that 911 was not available while they faced an emergency; and

"Whereas all Ontarians expect and deserve access to 911 service, throughout our province;

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide 911 emergency response everywhere in Ontario by land line or cellphone."

I support this petition, will my affix my name to it and give it to my good page Claire to bring to the Clerk.

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POLICE SERVICES

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, this petition is entitled “Petition in Support of Ontario Getting More Boots on the Ground by Making It Easier to Recruit and Train Police Officers.

“To the Solicitor General:

“Whereas the government of Ontario is committed to ensuring the safety of Ontario communities; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario is committed to supporting our hard-working women and men in blue, who put their lives on the line every day in police forces across the province of Ontario to keep our communities safe;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To support the passage of Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, to ensure the following:

“(1) Make it easier for police services across the province to recruit and train more police officers by removing tuition fees for the basic constable training program at the Ontario Police College, also known as OPC, and immediately expand the number of recruits that can be trained each year;

“(2) To expand the Basic Constable Training Program at the Ontario Police College immediately to accommodate an additional 70 recruits per cohort from 480 to 550;

“(3) Starting in 2024, expand the Basic Constable Training Program to four cohorts per year instead of three cohorts;

“(4) Additionally, to support recruitment efforts at a time when local police officers have signalled challenges in doing so, and introduce legislation that, if passed, will eliminate the post-secondary education requirement to become a police officer as set out in the Community Safety and Policing Act, also known as the CSPA, and if passed, the act would amend the CSPA to provide that a secondary school diploma or equivalent is sufficient education for the purposes of being appointed as a police officer; and

“(5) To make the elimination of the tuition fee for the Basic Constable Training Program at the Ontario Police College retroactive to January 1, 2023, and recruits who paid for their 12-week basic constable training earlier this year to be reimbursed.”

I proudly affix my signature to this petition, and I will be giving it to page Sophie.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m very pleased, as the critic for infrastructure for the party, to read this petition.

“911 Everywhere in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911 for help; and

“Whereas access to emergency services through 911 is not available in all regions of Ontario but most Ontarians believe that it is; and

“Whereas many Ontarians have discovered that 911 was not available while they faced an emergency; and

“Whereas all Ontarians expect and deserve access to 911 service, throughout our province;

“We the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To provide 911 emergency response everywhere in Ontario by land line or cellphone.”

Of course, I support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with Akshitha.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I have a petition here.

“To Raise Social Assistance Rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,227 for ODSP;

“Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

“Whereas the recent small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to live in this time of alarming inflation;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a ‘basic income’ of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and give it to page Mackenzie to bring to the table.

POLICE SERVICES

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is entitled “Petition in Support of Ontario Getting More Boots on the Ground by Making It Easier to Recruit and Train Police Officers.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario is committed to ensuring the safety of Ontario communities; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario is committed to supporting our hard-working women and men in blue, who put their lives on the line every day in police forces across the province of Ontario to keep our communities safe;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support the passage of Bill 102, Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, to ensure the following:

“(1) Make it easier for police services across the province to recruit and train more police officers by removing tuition fees for the Basic Constable Training Program at the Ontario Police College, also known as OPC, and immediately expand the number of recruits that could be trained each year;

“(2) To expand the Basic Constable Training Program at the Ontario Police College immediately to accommodate an additional 70 recruits per cohort from 480 to 550;

“(3) Starting in 2024, expand the Basic Constable Training Program to four cohorts per year instead of three;

“(4) Additionally, to support recruitment efforts at a time when police officers have signalled challenges in doing so, introduce legislation that, if passed, will eliminate the post-secondary education requirement to become a police officer as set out in the Community Safety and Policing Act, also known as the CSPA, and if passed, the act would amend the CSPA to provide that a secondary school diploma or equivalent is sufficient education for the purposes of being appointed as a police officer; and

“(5) To make the elimination of the tuition fee for the Basic Constable Training Program at the Ontario Police College retroactive to January 1, 2023, and recruits who paid for their 12-week basic constable training earlier this year to be reimbursed.”

I'll proudly affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Mridul. Thank you.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present the following petition. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board of directors has, without consultation with the affected stakeholders, announced the permanent closure of the emergency department located in the municipality of Minden Hills, Ontario, effective June 1, 2023;

“We, the undersigned, petition that a moratorium of this decision be implemented by the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care immediately for a period of a minimum of one year to allow for consultations with all affected stakeholders to occur.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Senna to the Clerks.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank my constituents who've been collecting these petitions at the Guelph Farmers' Market. It's a petition to protect the greenbelt.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Premier has persistently promised over the past four years not to develop the greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Premier has plans to build the Highway 413 that would pave over 400 acres of the greenbelt, and over 2,000 acres of class 1 and class 2 farmland; and

“Whereas the government refuses to repeal Bill 23 and halt their destructive pro-sprawl agenda; and

“Whereas the government now has plans to open up over 7,400 acres of the greenbelt to pro-sprawl developers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately halt all plans to develop the greenbelt and commit to cancelling Highway 413, and to instead invest in livable and affordable communities connected by transit that protect the nature that protects us, the farmland that feeds us and mitigates climate pollution.”

I support this petition, will sign it and ask page Sophie to bring it to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to thank the students at the McMaster faculty of social sciences for this petition to raise social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,227 for ODSP;

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“Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

“Whereas the recent small increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a 'basic income' of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.”

I will affix my signature and send it to the Clerk.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

M^{me} Lucille Collard: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the process popularly known as declawing is actually an amputation, that is the equivalent of cutting off a human's fingers from the knuckle up;

“Whereas the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association considers declawing to be an unnecessary cosmetic procedure;

“Whereas research has shown that declawing a cat significantly reduces a cat's quality of life and leads to behavioural and health problems;

“Whereas declawing eliminates a cat's ability defend itself when in danger; and

“Whereas the process is considered to be inhumane and is banned in more than 40 countries;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To ban the unnecessary and inhumane procedure known as declawing in the province of Ontario.”

I will affix my signature to this and give it to Claire to bring to the table.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “Protect the Greenbelt: Repeal Bill 23.” I want to thank the people from Kitchener and Elmira for collecting the signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 23 will remove protected land from the greenbelt, allowing wealthy developers to profit by bulldozing over 7,000 acres of farmland;

“Whereas green spaces and farmland are what we rely on to grow food, support natural habitats, prevent flooding, and mitigate future climate disasters;

“Whereas Ontario loses” 319 “acres of farmland daily to development;

“Whereas the government’s Housing Affordability Task Force found there are plenty of places to build homes without destroying the greenbelt, showcasing that Bill 23 was never about housing but about making the rich richer;

“Whereas the power of conservation authorities will be taken away, weakening environmental protections, and preventing future development;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately repeal Bill 23, stop all plans to further remove protected land from the greenbelt....”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Leonard.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Andréane Chénier de Hanmer dans mon comté pour cette pétition.

« Soutenez le système d’éducation francophone en Ontario...

« Attendu que les enfants francophones ont un droit constitutionnel à une éducation de haute qualité, financée par les fonds publics, dans leur ... langue;

« Attendu que l’augmentation des inscriptions dans le système d’éducation en langue française signifie que plus de 1 000 nouveaux enseignants et enseignantes de langue française sont nécessaires chaque année pour les cinq prochaines années;

« Attendu que les changements apportés au modèle de financement du gouvernement provincial pour la formation des enseignantes et enseignants de langue française signifient que l’Ontario n’en forme que 500 par an;

« Attendu que le nombre de personnes qui enseignent sans certification complète dans le système d’éducation en langue française a augmenté de plus de 450 % au cours de la dernière décennie; »

Ils et elles demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario « de fournir immédiatement le financement demandé » dans « le rapport du groupe de travail sur la pénurie des enseignantes et des enseignants dans le système d’éducation en langue française ... et de travailler

avec des partenaires pour mettre pleinement en oeuvre » ces « recommandations. »

J’appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. J’affixe mon nom et je demande à Dominic de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR UN ONTARIO FORT (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 17, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to implement Budget measures and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I rise today in support of the Building a Strong Ontario Act and to speak to our government’s plan to navigate these uncertain times and help people and businesses.

I want to talk to you today about something that affects my constituents of Carleton: economic uncertainty. My constituents, every day, are facing the cost-of-living pressures due to high inflation, interest rates and supply chain disruptions. Understandably, families, workers and businesses in Carleton are feeling the pinch and looking to the government for help. And that’s precisely what we’re doing.

We’ve developed a plan called Building a Strong Ontario that’s responsible, targeted and designed to help people and businesses today while creating a solid fiscal foundation for future generations. And the good news is that this plan is already showing results. Our population is growing, jobs are being created, and we’re attracting manufacturing investments. In fact, Ontario’s population has surpassed 15 million people, with 275,000 more people moving here yearly. This growth is helping to strengthen my riding of Carleton, and that benefits families, workers, businesses and public services. And it’s allowing all of Ontario to remain resilient during economic uncertainty. Our plan is focused on building up and investing in Ontario’s economy for the future with the infrastructure needed to support growth across the province.

Our government is training workers for future jobs, keeping costs down today, and providing better services for the people of Ontario and their families. One example of this in my riding is the investment in hospice care, with over \$3 million going towards the Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa. This expansion will more than double the capacity of Ronald McDonald House from 55,000 stays to 115,000 overnight stays per year for families with children being treated at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

And as a part of our effort to establish a more interconnected and convenient health care system, we have undertaken an exceedingly ambitious initiative for hospital expansion in Ontario. Over the next decade, we will invest more than \$48 billion in hospital infrastructure, which encompasses over \$32 billion in hospital capital grants.

Notably, the Queensway Carleton Hospital mental health redevelopment project already achieved significant milestones, including the completion of construction in December 2022. This development incorporates two additional acute mental health beds and an expansion of mental health and addiction programs and services. This was much needed. I recall visiting the centre and doing a tour and speaking with those front-line health care workers who were providing services to patients in that facility, and this is welcome news for them. The remaining renovations are expected to be finalized by November 2023, leading to positive outcomes for my constituents in Carleton and the entire Ottawa and eastern Ontario region.

I am pleased to discuss our province's commitment to improving Ontario's transportation infrastructure. Our government has pledged \$27.9 billion over the next decade to enhance connectivity, reduce traffic congestion and facilitate the movement of goods and people throughout the province. Through the Ontario highways program, over 600 expansion and renovation initiatives are either currently under way or are slated for completion within the next four years. Additionally, we are widening existing highways to boost capacity and enhance traveller safety.

Madam Speaker, I'm particularly thrilled about the ongoing and future projects that will benefit the residents of Carleton. Recently, the rehabilitation and replacement of bridges at Innes Road and Ramsayville Road were completed as part of the Highway 417 project in Ottawa. Furthermore, we're committed to finishing the widening of a 22.5-kilometre stretch of Highway 17 from Arnprior to Renfrew, which will be a significant boon to both Ottawa and eastern Ontario.

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It's a well-known fact that small businesses and entrepreneurs are the driving force of our province. For this reason, our government is backing regional innovation centre hubs. These hubs play a crucial role in aiding entrepreneurship by working with other regional innovation centres and organizers to provide entrepreneurs with the necessary resources to launch and sustain their businesses. Our government is committed to supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs, and this budget demonstrates that commitment.

All of these investments in my riding of Carleton and across the Ottawa region mean more well-paying jobs, and more well-paying jobs grow our economy. But don't take my word for it, Madam Speaker; just listen to what the president and CEO of Invest Ottawa, Michael Tremblay, said about the government's proposed budget:

"This government budget firmly secures the key role we play in our community and Ontario, enabling us to serve more high-growth entrepreneurs and companies that

fuel our economy. It will help us to achieve an even greater economic impact and ensure that innovative businesses in Ottawa continue to grow and succeed today and for years to come. We are very grateful to the government of Ontario for this critical investment in our community."

Christine Hardy, the CEO of the Ronald McDonald House Charities Ottawa, has said, "Receiving this incredible \$3.1 million grant from the government of Ontario will enable our Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa to officially break ground this year and get started on a much-needed expansion of 22 more bedrooms. We have been operating since 1984 with just 14 bedrooms, we are always at full capacity, and desperately need to grow to reflect the diverse needs of the communities we serve and to reduce our wait-list. When families stay at the house it is because their child is receiving urgent critical medical care far from home, often for months and in some cases years at a time. It is my honour to speak on behalf of all Ronald McDonald House Ottawa-region families with sick children when I say thank you—having this kind of recognition from the government of Ontario is truly helping us make room for all families."

Madam Speaker, I've had the honour and the privilege of visiting the Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa twice. The most recent time was just this past year. I spoke with Christine Hardy, and this is one of the things we spoke about. To see our government taking this feedback, to see our government listening to local MPPs—when I do these tours and I go back to the Premier and the ministers and I say, "This is what the community needs in the Ottawa area," for this \$3.1-million investment in Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa to be specifically in the budget is a testament to our government's commitment to serving the people of Ontario.

Christine Hardy said thank you to our government. Madam Speaker, I also say thank you to our government for finally listening to the needs of the people of Ottawa and the people in eastern Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as we continue to grow our economy and create more jobs, we have to tackle the labour shortage that's facing every community in Ontario, including in my riding of Carleton. In order to develop a strong workforce that can meet the demands of today and tomorrow's job market, our government is investing significant resources. We'll be investing an additional \$75 million over the next three years in our Skills Development Fund. Additionally, we're allocating an extra \$224 million to expand training centres and leverage private sector expertise, including union-led training halls. This will allow us to train and retain skilled workers in high-demand fields.

Madam Speaker, I see my time is running short, so I just want to end my speech by saying that I'm pleased to support our government's budget. I urge all members to join me in getting it done for the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario will always be able to rely on this government and this Premier to have their backs, and we will continue to do so, because that's why they voted for us, that's what they count on us for, and that's what we will continue to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Carleton for her comments. I think we can all agree that the best place for seniors—the place where they are healthiest in body, mind and soul—is at home, when they are supported in their home.

Community support services presented during the pre-budget consultations for the 2023 budget and showed how early intervention is key and critical to make sure that people are healthiest at home. Presenters from community support services included such groups as Meals on Wheels. I also heard from Cheshire homes in my community, St. Joe's hospice and the Alzheimer Society.

When seniors are cared for properly within the community, with community support services, it actually diverts costs and makes sure that people have the care that they need, because for someone to be supported at home, it costs \$42; in long-term care, it's \$126; and in hospital, it's \$842.

My question to the member: Why do we not see increased investment in community support services for our seniors living at home?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, through you, I would like to thank the member for his question.

To ensure that more seniors who need financial help receive it, our government is proposing to make changes to expand the eligibility for GAINS, which is the Guaranteed Annual Income System for seniors. Starting in July 2024, it would see about 100,000 more low-income seniors receive payment, with a 50% increase in recipients.

Madam Speaker, we're also building more long-term-care beds, and we're also making sure that seniors are protected at home. For example, we're investing in community paramedicine: more than \$174 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to continue the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Program.

Our government is investing in seniors, and we will continue to support those people who helped us to build Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Carleton for her presentation. I really appreciate how you speak with people in your community and the feedback that you are receiving from your community members.

As you know, the Minister of Finance has mentioned, or told this House about, our 2023 budget, which strikes the right balance. We know that education and health care are the biggest, how shall we say—that's where most of our funding goes, to both health care and education. My question to the member is, why is it so important to invest in these two areas, and what feedback have you received from your community members, maybe on the increase in the mental health spending that we're doing?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you very much to the member for the question—a very thoughtful question.

You know, Madam Speaker, when I think about public education, I think about my story. My parents immigrated to Canada when I was a year old. They came here to escape a fascist dictatorship, and they came to Canada because they wanted to have an opportunity to raise their one-year-old daughter in a free and democratic society. When they came to Canada, they had two suitcases, \$50 in their pocket and a one-year-old daughter, me. Back in 1986, their first night in Canada, they had rented an apartment. The apartment was barren—it was empty, because they had just arrived—and so my dad tells me that their first night in Canada, they slept on newspapers and I was sleeping in my parents' jackets.

Now, 37 years later, here I am, a politician in the provincial Legislature of Ontario, and that's because of our public education system, Madam Speaker. I am a product of the public education system. That is why—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. The member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks to the member from Carleton for her comments on the budget bill. I was taken aback a little bit by her comments around hospice, because Hospice Care Ottawa actually came to the budget committee and they asked the government, the Conservative government of Ontario, to address the unfair funding formula. They made a very compelling case, I would say, on the return on investment for investing in hospice to avoid people ending up in hospital or emergency care during the end stages of their lives. But they specifically said that the operational costs in hospices are only funded to 60%, so this leaves hospices fundraising for nurses, PSWs and grief counselling. And we heard loud and clear at finance committee how important it is.

1540

Why did Bill 85 not address this crucial part of health care funding for a more compassionate and dignified end for Ontarians?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm not sure why the member was taken aback by my comments, because the comments that I made came from an email that I received personally from Christine Hardy, the CEO of Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa. I'm just going to repeat the email that she sent. In her email, she said, "Receiving this incredible \$3.1-million grant from the government of Ontario will enable our Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa to officially break ground this year and get started on a much-needed expansion of 22 more bedrooms."

Madam Speaker, Ronald McDonald House has been seeking this expansion for years. They were ignored by the previous government, which was supported by the NDP, by the way. And it's only under this government and this Premier that Ronald McDonald House in Ottawa finally got funding to expand and create more beds since they were created in 1984.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? The member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the member for Carleton: I'd like her to talk about the impact of the budget specifically on her riding and what

those investments mean to her hard-working families in Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for that question. The impact is huge; the impact is very, very significant. One of the biggest concerns in my riding of Carleton is the labour shortage. We know Ontario needs more skilled workers to tackle our province's labour shortage, to strengthen the economy and to build a stronger workforce for everyone. Madam Speaker, that's why in this budget, to help workers and job seekers, including apprentices, get the skills they need to take on new opportunities and advance their careers, our government is enhancing the Skills Development Fund with an additional \$75 million over the next three years.

I also spoke about union halls and union learning centres. What comes to mind is the ironworkers located in Metcalfe, which I've had the pleasure of visiting several times, including with Minister McNaughton. This budget is going to help people who work and train at the ironworkers in Metcalfe and others all across my riding of Carleton, because skilled trades is such an important profession. As the daughter of a skilled trades worker, this is a testament to how we are supporting Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for Carleton for her comments. This budget does nothing substantial to address emergency rooms scaling back and closing across the province, while at the same time the government is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in court to suppress health care workers' wages. Does the member believe that this reflects the priorities of the people of Ontario?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for that question. Madam Speaker, Ontario is investing \$200 million in 2023-24 to extend supports to address immediate health care staffing shortages, as well as to grow the workforce for years to come. This includes up to 6,000 health care student training opportunities to work in hospitals. This includes supporting up to 3,000 internationally educated nurses to become accredited nurses in Ontario.

When that party, when the official opposition speaks about diversity and supporting immigrants, what did they do for immigrants like me and my family and my friends who came here with these health care degrees and were ignored by the Liberals for 15 years, which were supported by the NDP? It is our government that is actually supporting these health care workers trained in other countries to get the jobs that they are qualified to do here in Ontario. That is why I support this government and this budget, and I am proud to be a part of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise to speak to Bill 85, and I want to thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest—to debate the budget bill.

As we heard in this House many, many times—and I know my colleague from Waterloo talks about it—budgets

are about priorities, about the investments that we make to care for the people of our province, about the choices that prioritize the needs of the people.

This budget that is in question here, according to members opposite, is the biggest budget in the history of this province—and this is actually a quote from government members—the biggest spending, which seems like a great start, when you look at the current reality of so many people in our province.

I know my government colleagues will heckle me, so I'm ready for that. Go ahead.

I want to start off by saying what happened during the pre-budget consultation. Let me just read a quote from the pre-budget consultation, from economic affairs. This is what the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and the Association of Municipalities Ontario, who have, all together, summarized and highlighted in this report—which is, a number of witnesses expressed uncertainty about the financial impact of the changes on municipal budgets. Some witnesses asked that the province ensure financial support for municipalities to mitigate potential negative outcomes. And they went on to talk about some of the needs.

We know that municipalities are dealing with the post-COVID crisis right now and what's going on and the reality that we're facing in our province. This is a dire situation. People are struggling, people are suffering, and we need to do anything and everything possible to support them.

There were many people who came during the pre-budget consultation, and we thought that there would be a lot of hope—to make sure that we support them.

Right now, we're facing an affordability crisis. When we talk about the cost of food, the cost of living, housing, rent, it's impossible—especially with the lack of rent control. The dream of home ownership seems very far away. We're talking about social housing wait-lists, which is about 85,000 right now—families waiting, people waiting. The LTB has about 38,000 people waiting for hearings. The cost of bills like hydro, gas etc.—everything has gone up. A health care crisis, especially with staffing—recruitment, retaining of staff, especially with Bill 124. The needs in our schools—the amount of infrastructure and staffing that we need in our schools. OW and ODSP—just to keep up with inflation. All of these asks were in the pre-budget consultation. And we hear it from our constituents every single day, and I know members opposite hear that as well.

Many Ontarians tell me about how they wake up at 5 a.m., they work hard, they work and work and work to pay the bills and to put food on the table for their family, and yet it's just not enough. People are losing hope.

When we look at a budget that the province comes up with—we are hoping that this budget will address those concerns that I just highlighted.

So when we talk about the biggest spending ever—but then I look at this budget. And when the budget was released, as soon as people took a look at it, one of the first things I heard was how cruel this budget is, because it is

the biggest spending, and yet the budget missed the mark in addressing so many of the issues that people are facing across this province.

Let me tell you what the Toronto Star editorial board said—and not my words; this is the Toronto Star's editorial board: that this government is spending, but it's not getting to the people in the province. From the education sector, to the health care sector, to the community services, to the people, to our children, this budget completely misses the mark.

Instead of a budget that pulls people up when they're drowning, you have a budget that actually pushes people further into poverty and leaves them behind. Goods and services cost more and more. And this budget does nothing to support those people. When we talk of price gouging, for example—it does nothing.

1550

I want to talk about what happened after the budget was introduced. We were sitting in finance committee and we heard—I have a very limited amount of time so I'm trying to rush through everything that I have here, and I know I won't get to everything. So let me just start off with one of the organizations that I thought was really interesting in the way they kind of put together the holistic summary of what they're facing. This was actually Vista Centre Brain Injury Services that came to the deputation for the budget hearings. This is what they said: "In Canada, every 3.5 minutes, there is a brain injury. I will repeat that: In Canada, every 3.5 minutes, there is a brain injury."

And he went on to talk about what the needs are and how to effectively address this, which means investing in our health care system. What they asked for was an increase in their budget. And Speaker, let me tell you what the government has done so far. Over the last 10 years, they have only received a 2% increase in their budget.

What was really interesting is that from a health care perspective, the Vista Centre Brain Injury Services talked about housing, and I was really intrigued by this because they actually brought it back and said: "Do you know what the number one issue our clients tell us? Housing." This is what he said: "The number one issue that has been identified in my area is housing, and when I talk about housing, I mean specialized housing not only for people" who are facing "a disability, but people who have an acquired brain injury" as well. And guess what the number of years they wait for it? From 15 to 20 years, they wait for housing.

We heard from other organizations, like non-profit organizations. One of them was Earth Education League, and I want to quote Jodi, because I think she does a fantastic job about Bill 85. She said, "Bill 85 includes funding for school boards for the next academic year at a mere 2.7% increase; 2.7% is significantly below the rate of inflation and won't meet the students' needs. Critics have indicated that when accounting tricks are set aside, we are seeing a decrease in per-student funding of nearly \$1,000 as a result of this budget. We need to invest in classrooms, in educators and adults in the room, not on

online learning, not on TVO and D2L, not on privatization through back doors."

I thought Jodi just did a fantastic job talking about the needs of our education system and how this budget fails to address that as well.

Speaker, I wish I could share some of the other organizations that talked about their disappointment as well, because not only did the budget not address some of this, they did not even keep up with inflation. They did not even keep up with inflation for our needs in our education, in our health care system, in housing. And yet we have the biggest spending ever in a provincial budget. That's what the government is bragging about. But it does not go to the people who are struggling, who are suffering, who are hurting right now.

So let's look at what this government is actually spending the money on, and I hope I can address this in the next few minutes that I have.

Bill 23, which is the result of this government, a bill that they brought forward: What's happening is that municipalities are losing money and now they don't have the ability to keep up with a lot of the expenditures that they have. And now that will actually cost taxpayers more money because a lot of municipalities are concerned that they have to raise property taxes.

We also have Highway 413. This government won't even talk about how much Highway 413 will cost. We've got report after report, article after article that talks about how the Premier fails to talk about the exact cost of Highway 413—another idea brought by this government which will pave over wetlands, protected lands. Not only that, it's going to cost taxpayers a lot of money and the government won't even tell us exactly how much it's going to cost. And you know, my colleague the NDP critic for finance and the member from Waterloo, during her presentation, went on about some of the other ways the government is losing revenue for this province as well.

The FAO reported that this government—\$6.4 billion didn't even go where it was supposed to. We have Bonnie Lysyk, the Auditor General—and I want to thank her for her service to this province—who talked about how this government is losing money on the OLG. So not only does the government not have the amount of revenue they're supposed to be getting, they have a smaller share of revenue coming in and then they're spending it on the 1%, the 2%, the select few that they choose, and not the people of this province, Speaker. And where—I'm almost out of time.

Ontario Place: You've got \$650 million that's going to go to a luxury spa, an Austrian spa—not even a business of this province—\$650 million. And then there is a \$450-million parking lot that's supposed to be an underwater parking lot, I think, like the biggest car wash, I guess, that this province has ever seen—the costliest—but this is where the money will be spent.

Then, if you think about Highway 407—this is a comparison I can make because that's the result we're facing right now, where we have a 1,200% increase of what the cost of this—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: The member from Scarborough Southwest brought up Ontario Place. This is something that I remember going to as a kid and being one of the coolest places to really, truly go in Toronto and get to experience a little bit of Ontario's flavour. I don't understand for the life of me why they want to continually try and block reinvestment and redevelopment in Ontario Place.

To the member from Scarborough Southwest: I certainly hope you don't ever get caught at the spa there because you guys certainly talk about it a lot, and I just wonder what maybe her vision is. If our vision for Ontario Place isn't good enough and not what the people want to see for Ontario Place, what does she want to see at Ontario Place? Because maybe it's something that we can incorporate into it as well.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you so much for the opportunity. I want to thank the member for his question. Honestly, I wish this were the type of dialogue that we could have because we need to have a public park, a public space that is serving the people of this province, that is accessible, that won't cost the people money and actually give profit to a private company that is not even Ontarian.

And not to mention, one of the things that's really difficult for me is understanding—has the government actually done research on Therme? We're giving \$650 million to a luxury spa. Have we done—like, what their financial track record is? They have a very problematic track record in the UK. Have we done our research to see what they have done, what their track record looks like and what it will mean when we have a 95-year lease for Ontario? Because that's a defective sale—

Interjection.

Ms. Doly Begum: Well, the king can get rid of your own home after 99 years, right? When you have a house, for example, the law after 99 years—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Further questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Speaker. To the member who just did her best to squeeze all of the voices of Ontario into only 10 minutes, I wanted to ask her some of the things she's hearing from people whose voices did not make it into this budget.

We're hearing a lot across communities—and the Conservatives are as well, if they're listening—from the folks who are dependent upon food banks. Unfortunately, those stats are growing and food banks are reporting that they are meeting new neighbours they've never met before, that they are serving people who have jobs, perhaps have a home and a mortgage and who aren't typically the people they have seen. What is in this budget for them or what could have been a help for them?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for that question, to the member from Oshawa. I was recently at Feed Scarborough, one of the local food banks in my riding, and what the volunteers were telling me is, they have about 7,000 people visiting their food bank every week. It has

increased so much, and this food bank was actually just a pop-up during COVID. They've now made it permanent and they're continuing to serve because that's what the need looks like. It's so dire, and we need to be able to invest and support the services that we need.

That means we need to make sure that people don't go hungry, don't go homeless. That is the most important part when we talk about budgets because then you're prioritizing things like housing, you're prioritizing things like the amount you need for ODSP and OW. We're not keeping up with those things. We're not keeping up with the inflation rate of any of these needs, and that's what the result is. We're seeing thousands of people lining up, and some people who have never gone to a food bank are now getting food at a food bank.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for her comments. There were a couple of words that I heard from her remarks. One was on housing, and the other was on spending. On housing, I'm delighted to hear the member say that we have a need for housing. I'll just remind her that this government plans to build a million and a half homes over the next 10 years—an excellent plan—and further, to encourage affordable homes, removing development charges on affordable homes. Also, the Homelessness Prevention Program: \$202 million in this budget. I was delighted to hear what I thought was support for these housing initiatives.

1600

On the spending side, this is the budget document. On page 139—people have heard me refer to that before—health care spending will be up \$15.3 billion over the next three years. I'm curious as to whether those are important positives for the member to consider.

Ms. Doly Begum: I've also looked at the budget and read the budget. One of the other things that I looked at was, during the pre-consultation, what people talked about, and after the budget was released, during the committee hearings. You know what? I agree with the member: When we talk about housing, we do need to build housing. We need to do it ASAP, and we're so behind. I mentioned the fact that we have 85,000 people waiting for housing. But we also need to make sure that we address the type of housing that we're building, that we address the way we're doing that. First of all, we cannot be building it on the greenbelt.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: There's no need to.

Ms. Doly Begum: There is no need to. We have something called the whitebelt, which is already zoned for that, and you can work with municipalities to do that. The other part of it is, what kind of housing are you building? What kind of support are we giving to make sure that people have ownership of that and people are able to enjoy those homes and have them affordably?

If they're not affordable, people are moving from this province. That's what we're seeing right now. We have health care workers who move away from the province because they don't earn enough, first, and then they can't

keep up with their rent or they can't keep up with their mortgage. Some don't even have a mortgage because they can't even imagine buying a home.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for your presentation. You were talking about really shortchanging schools in terms of their funding. I know that the COVID funding was never replaced that they were supposed to have replaced and that the funding does not come close to matching inflation. We're also hearing about increased violence in schools. I'm wondering if you can make the connection for us between the lack of funding and resources and what is actually happening in schools right now.

Ms. Doly Begum: This is what you do when you prepare for 20 minutes, and then you realize you have 10 minutes, so you struggle to put everything together and don't get to talk about some of these issues. In my community, in Scarborough Southwest, we actually had multiple incidents of violence. Just recently, we had one in one of our high schools. It's just unbelievable, what we're seeing.

I actually had a few students who came to Queen's Park to visit me, and they brought me a report. They brought me an actual report that they'd compiled about the gun violence, about the stabbings that we're seeing. Guess what was one of the conversations that we talked about? We talked about the fact that kids are facing loneliness. They have felt isolated. They have mental health needs. A lot of people are facing poverty. Some don't even have breakfast before they come to school. All of these things have an impact on the way they come to learn in their institutions. That impacts that as well.

The other thing is, we have to make sure that we have enough educators in our spaces, that we have enough staff in our schools to be able to be there. The fact that Birchmount Park Collegiate did not even have enough hall monitors is a problem. These are the people who can actually address what's going on in our schools and make that environment safe and accessible—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: One of the things that I talked about yesterday in my little 10 minutes of debate—and you're right; it's hard to fit in 200, 300 pages of budget into 10 minutes—was manufacturing jobs. We lost about 300,000 manufacturing jobs under the previous government. Roughly 20,000 of those were in Waterloo region, where I live. It's really great to see a lot of that come back. A lot of that is coming back because of the government's investment in the auto sector, specifically around electric vehicles.

The member opposite has several tier-1 and tier-2 auto parts manufacturers in and around her general area. I'm just wondering if I can get her thoughts on what she thinks of those investments and how we're bringing those jobs back to the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick response.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for the great questions you're giving me today—with very little time. Scarborough Southwest actually has even residues of what it used to be. We used to have such an amazing automotive sector. You can see some of the remnants still there. I hope that we can bring that back, and I know that if we invest in that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you so much. Further debate?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I rise today to debate Bill 85, the budget measures act.

The people of Ontario really want one thing from their government: to do the right thing for the people of Ontario, the people they are elected to serve. Today, we are debating a budget that this government's Minister of Finance says is about investing in people and the economy of Ontario to support our collective well-being and prosperity. I have to say, I beg to differ. Let me give you some context.

Before this government came to power, the Liberal government invested in health care, reducing the shortage of family doctors and significantly reducing emergency wait times.

The Liberal government built transportation, including the Union Pearson Express, GO train expansion service, the Yonge subway expansion as well as the resurrection of the Eglinton line following the irresponsible and short-sighted cancellation by Conservative Premier Harris. And we resurrected the Finch subway line. We started the Eglinton Crosstown and built Highways 412 and 418.

We created the greenbelt to protect our environment, to protect our agricultural lands, to protect our water.

We ended the burning of coal, turning Ontario into one of the most environmentally friendly jurisdictions in the world, with clean energy at 96% in 2017, which has indeed attracted manufacturing jobs the Conservatives brag about. What will happen to those jobs under this Conservative budget, which sees Ontario's clean energy shrink to under 90%? That remains to be seen.

While jobs were lost during the global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008, the Liberal government steered the province through that crisis. In fact, from 2004 to 2018, during the Liberal government, the number of jobs in the province increased from 10.3 million to 12.5 million.

Most significantly, our Liberal government introduced all-day kindergarten and brought up high school graduate rates from 67% to 87%.

Fiscal responsibility is making good decisions for the people of Ontario, investing in our greatest resource: the people of our province. Yet that is not what the people of Ontario see when they read this budget bill.

In 2018, this government came to office promising to fix hallway medicine and the cost of housing, heralding a new era of fiscal responsibility. And this government continues to brag about their record on that, so let's do a reality check. Five years into a Conservative government, and the Conservatives brag about record investments in

health care in this budget—but spending record amounts of money and seeing our health care system fall apart at the same time is nothing to brag about. With ERs closing and the number of patients receiving hallway health care 20% higher than it was in the last year of the Liberal government, I think it's fair to say that this money is not being spent responsibly. One example I've spoken of before is spending three times as much for a nurse through a private agency instead of paying that nurse what she deserves in our public system.

Let's talk about housing and the government's disappointing results on that. In 2019, the median rent for an apartment in Ontario was \$1,200; now it's \$1,400. The crisis is worse in our major cities—and those numbers include apartments still protected by rent control. The average list for a one-bedroom is \$2,523 a month, in Toronto, and \$3,347 for a two-bedroom.

Let's talk about spending and provincial debt. We have record spending and debt in this province right now under this government. In fact, we have the biggest spending spree in Ontario history, a budget of \$204 billion and a record \$406 billion in debt, with priorities given to a twin highway, the 413, for the 407 because they sold it off at a bargain basement price.

So while this government likes to deflect from their own record of broken promises and propensity to do back-room deals that benefit their friends more than Ontarians, the numbers tell the real story.

Spending on the people of Ontario is a good investment. It's investing in the health and education of our people, in the infrastructure that supports life and commerce in this province. And spending has indeed ballooned under this Conservative government, to over \$200 billion, as I said, and \$406 billion in debt—the highest it's ever been.

1610

That's right. The Conservatives—not the Liberals, not the NDP—take the prize for the biggest budget in Ontario history. And what indeed is there to show for it? Plans for new highways at the expense of our health care, housing and social programs that support the people of Ontario. While there are some positive investments in jobs and retraining, is life for the people of Ontario better after five years of a Conservative government?

As I mentioned, health care and housing are worse. The opioid crisis rages through our communities, with a 56% increase in emergency department visits and a 52% increase in deaths from opioid overdoses—not one new cent allocated to that in this budget. Farmland is disappearing at a record rate of 319 acres per day, threatening our food supply and worsening affordability.

In regards to people experiencing homelessness, we can't easily find the total number because the government cancelled their own recordkeeping on that matter, but our eyes don't deceive us. It is clear in cities large and small that the homeless population has skyrocketed, with tent cities and people sleeping in transit stations. The \$202 million announced in the budget for supportive housing and homelessness programs is a start, but underfunding agencies like CMHA is not supporting those who offer

support to the homeless and others suffering from mental health issues and addictions. To end homelessness, we need to end the housing crisis and ensure that every person in the province can have a roof over their heads.

But the budget shows that housing starts have slowed and that the province is behind on its housing goal. This is because inflation and labour shortages are making it too expensive to keep building, especially affordable homes. That means it's time for this government to step up and build homes instead of highways, to put meaningful taxpayer money into the construction of housing, supporting not-for-profits that are asking to do just that instead of asking the federal government to pick up the whole tab. Just today, in my meeting with CIJA, their housing not-for-profit executive director said, "I have been in housing for 35 years and I have never seen things so bad."

Similarly, high office vacancy rates, particularly in downtowns, could be converted into housing for cheaper than new builds. This would create new housing in areas served by existing infrastructure. The Alberta government is doing just that, and this budget was a missed opportunity to do so here in Ontario.

Let's talk about health care in rural areas. The announcement of the emergency department closure in Minden is a punch to the gut for that community and a canary in the coal mine for other rural towns. The government's laissez-faire attitude in regard to this is equally disturbing. Rural hospital departments will continue to close as they lack staff and funds, and this government needs to take serious action to ensure this does not happen.

Let's contrast that with what the government is going to spend taxpayer money on: half a billion to build an underwater parking lot for the mega-spa project, more than double the new investment in housing supports. That is not a good trade-off for the people of Ontario.

This budget invests \$27.9 billion in highway projects over the next 10 years. While this government stands in the House and spreads misinformation about the Liberals being opposed to highways, let me remind the government that a Liberal government built Highways 412 and 418. What I and the people of Ontario are concerned about is the process in which these highway projects were selected, as the Auditor General found that political staffers cancelled highway projects approved by the Liberal government in favour of projects deemed low priority by non-partisan public servants. This includes Highway 413, which the Auditor General estimates will cost more than other high-priority projects, including highway-widening projects in the north. This is not a transparent way to decide how to spend billions in infrastructure, and it's the opposite of fiscal responsibility.

Perhaps most concerning of all is the lack of transparency in the budget, like with contingency funds and legal fees. The government refuses to tell the people of Ontario how much they're spending on legal fees to continue their fight to appeal decisions like the one that found Bill 124 unconstitutional, and their refusal to disclose cabinet mandate letters.

Similarly, the budget provides for almost \$4 billion in contingencies, a completely un-transparent form of accounting that flouts all the best practices of fiscal responsibility. The budget does include a placeholder, though it's not specified, for the Therme spa and new parking lot underwater at Ontario Place. While the government provides no details themselves, there are reports the province has given this company a 95-year lease of our public lands, yet the details have not been disclosed—more non-transparency.

While the government says this is a typical lease, I would say it's more of a bargain for Therme. Even if they spend \$500 million, that is less than \$5 million in amortized expense per year. With a facility of, I think, 236,000 square feet, that's a cost of \$21 per square foot. Speaker, given the market price for space in downtown Toronto is \$42 a square foot—half of what Therme is paying—I would say Therme is getting a pretty good deal on the backs of Ontario taxpayers. And let me just add: Therme's owners are also not known to the Ontario public. We know it is their CEO and a company called A-Heat, but we do not know who owns A-Heat, so we do not know who stands to profit from this deal.

The government budget shows spending of over \$200 billion, a record sum, yet the people of Ontario are being left behind: left behind in hallways of hospitals, left behind with dismal options for housing, left relying on food banks even though they have full-time jobs, left on the streets to face—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: As the member may know, I have a particular interest in this budget, which I have been concentrating on for quite a while. It's \$13.4 million that has been dedicated to the guns, gangs and violence strategy, which I think is a very good strategy which will keep drugs out of high schools and away from teenagers by breaking up the drug supply chain.

My question to the member is this: Will she support the \$13.4 million for the anti-guns, gangs and violence strategy, or will she support the NDP defund-the-police policy?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I think I've given a lot of reasons here today why this budget is not supportable by me or my constituents, whether it's a lack of transparency on what the government is spending, spending money on parking lots instead of housing or not fixing our opioid crisis. We see the problems in front of us, Speaker, and this government knows that those problems are not being addressed by this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Don Valley West for her presentation. At the pre-budget consultations, we had the opportunity to hear from the Ontario Library Association, and they talked about the incredible value that public libraries provide. They also almost were a stand-in for MPP offices during COVID. They offer things like job training, small business support;

they have access to broadband as well as children's programming; access to physical resources as well as digital resources.

One thing that is a grave concern is that over the past 25 years, Ontario's public library systems have not seen an increase in their base funding. I wonder if the member would like to comment about the need to fund public libraries appropriately.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you for the question, and yes, those certainly were interesting presentations from our library providers. Again, that's just another example of a group left behind; a group left wondering what the \$4 billion in contingency funds is being squirreled away for, and left wondering why the government wants to spend money on a parking lot instead of things like libraries and housing for the homeless. So absolutely, I think the government could do better, and the people of Ontario deserve better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to say to the opposition member here, based on her presentation, I would have to assume you would want to support our very ambitious plan to invest over \$180 billion in building capital for this province, unlike 15 years under the Liberals, where you closed over 600 schools. How many hospitals did you build? I don't know. We've got 50 that are planned. Never mind long-term-care homes; you only built—how many was it, 600? In my riding alone, we have over 700 in the works right now. So my question to the member is: Will you not support this ambitious plan?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Well, again, I would characterize it as irresponsible, not ambitious. I think when you look at spending billions of dollars on parking lots instead of spending money on our school and our education programs—the Liberal government improved the high school graduation rate from 68% to 87%, so we don't need to think about the school closures at this point. I think people of Ontario can see the damage being done on the streets of Ontario, in the high schools where kids are struggling with mental health, and those programs deserve funding.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member from Don Valley West for her comments. This government has been in power for five years, and things are getting worse and worse for the average Ontarian on housing, on health care, on affordability. When do you think would be a good time for the government to realize that they're actually the past government and stop blaming everyone else for the issues that they create?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for the question. Certainly we hear the phrase "previous Liberal government" so many times that we play bingo on it over here. I think it's time to end that game of bingo. I think it's time for this government to acknowledge that five years is actually a long time. They've been in power long enough to realize that there are problems in our health

care, problems on the streets with our opioid crisis, and those are problems that they could be spending money on now to fix.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: There are lots of problems in Ontario that can still be blamed on Mike Harris. That's how bad his reign here in Ontario was, Madam Speaker. But for the debater and my colleague, the government is planning a half-billion-dollar expenditure on a parking lot to service their plans for Ontario Place. I'm wondering if she could tell us and the people of Ontario how \$500 million could better be spent.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you so much for the question. One important example is the funding on mental health. We heard from the Canadian Mental Health Association that they would like an 8% increase to their base spending. Well, instead they got 5%. These are people out there working every day on our streets to help people who are facing addictions, facing crises, helping students who are coping with the impacts of COVID. That's just one example, Speaker.

Another example would be on supportive housing in industries like the not-for-profit agencies, who are asking for money to help build more homes. They will run those homes. They will build them; they will run them. But they need some money to do it. That's another example.

So again, a spa instead of homes, to me, is not the right priority.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I listened to the member opposite, the independent member, talking about this, and she talked about our laissez-faire attitude. But for 15 years, we had a Liberal government who did nothing but run this province into the ground.

For example, she mentioned health care and said there was some problem. We're trying to fix the mess created by 15 years of Liberal government. We have added more beds for hospital capacity in this province in four years than the previous Liberal government did in 14. We're upgrading 28,000 long-term-care beds, and an additional 30,000 long-term-care beds are now being built. In seven or eight years your government built 611 beds. There was a 36,000-person wait-list to get into long-term care as a result of your government, the previous Liberal government, doing absolutely nothing on those factors.

Yes, we gave a 5% increase for mental health funding for the Canadian Mental Health Association, for which they were grateful, because we recognized the needs in mental health. Your government has a shameful record, frankly, for addressing Ontarians' concerns—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. The member from Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: To the member from Eglinton–Lawrence: It was this government that bailed out the auto sector in 2009. Those jobs are still here, and we're building on that today. I know that your government is very devoted to the auto sector, but that was partially because of the Liberal government helping save that sector.

People were not suffering from an ER closure in Minden during the Liberal government. That is the kind of crisis we're feeling now. And so when I talk about a laissez-faire attitude, I'm talking about saying, "Oh, that's Haliburton Highlands services' problem," instead of saying that this Ministry of Health needs to take accountability and make sure that those hospitals stay open to serve the people of Ontario.

I'm very proud of the record of the Ontario Liberal government, as I said, in helping fix our graduation rates, building the greenbelt, building highways and making sure that our education system was supported.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Don Valley West and I both listened at finance committee—and I just heard the member from Essex talk about defunding the police. What does she make of the fact that this Conservative government actually is defunding the police? They've lost the OPP detachments in Gogama, Foleyet, and the OPP is now fighting for the French River area.

So the great irony is that you are defunding police services in northern Ontario, and you should be ashamed of yourselves for that.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for the question.

You're right; we did hear, when we were in northern Ontario, about the increased needs for police services because of the drug crisis. Again, this is small-town Ontario, who are seeing criminals from across the province, from across the borders, come to their communities because it's near the Trans-Canada Highway and it's a shipping line to deliver drugs across the country.

So, absolutely, we need to make sure that police have the resources they need to fight crime—and that isn't just in our big cities, but in our small towns too.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'm excited to speak to the third reading of our very important legislation, Building a Strong Ontario Act, 2023. The government of Ontario is committed to building a strong and resilient Ontario that is aimed at achieving sustainable economic growth and improving the quality of life for all of our citizens.

The Building a Strong Ontario Act and the 2023 budget were recently introduced by our great Minister of Finance. Before I begin, I want to thank him for the tremendous work he has done, and both his PAs, who have put a lot of time and effort into this—the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Oakville—in collaboration with all of our colleagues here in the chamber.

Madam Speaker, there are five key themes in what our government is doing in the 2023 budget, Building a Strong Ontario. These five themes are "Building Ontario's Economy for Today and Tomorrow"; "Building Highways, Transit and Infrastructure Projects"; "Working for Workers"; "Keeping Your Costs Down"; and "Better Services for You."

This plan will help build a strong economy for today and tomorrow. It is a plan to make life more affordable for

everyone who calls Ontario home, with better public programs and services and a plan that makes safer streets.

Speaker, we're driving forward our plan to tap into the resources of Ontario's north, to supply the critical minerals that are crucial in modern EV batteries. These natural resources and this connected infrastructure and the revitalizing manufacturing base in the province's south are all connected and will help bring investments and better jobs with bigger paycheques to Ontario. This can be seen with the Magna International investment of \$265 million, bringing a new EV battery enclosure that will bring approximately 560 new jobs to Brampton.

Our government has committed close to \$1 billion to support critical legacy infrastructure such as all-season roads, broadband connectivity and community support in the Ring of Fire region in order to ensure that we keep moving forward on one of the most promising mineral deposits in Canada—one that will play a critical role in batteries, electronics, electric vehicles and clean technology.

Our government is committed to continuing to grow and strengthen the wonderful province of Ontario. We'll be doing so by continuing to build highways, transit and critical infrastructure projects. These key projects, such as the planning and construction of Highway 413, will continue to connect Ontario and get you closer to your loved ones. This is supported by a total investment of \$27.9 billion over the next 10 years to connect communities, fight gridlock and keep goods and people moving across the province. The Ontario highways program includes more than 600 expansion and rehabilitation projects that are either under way or planned over the next four years. In 2023-24 alone, Ontario is investing \$3.2 billion towards projects that will expand and repair provincial highways and bridges.

The government is also investing \$70.5 billion for transit over the next 10 years, including continuing to transform the GO Transit rail network into a modern, reliable and fully integrated rapid transit network, further ensuring our promise of two-way, all-day GO. For our transit users, our government is dedicated to making the process of taking public transit as efficient and cost-friendly as possible. This is why we're working to expand the credit and debit card payment system for riders, as we're providing more user-friendly options to pay fares on a Presto device.

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As costs continue to rise due to economic factors such as inflation, we are committed to keeping costs down for families in Ontario. We're doing so by putting more money back into the pockets of Ontarians by continuing to provide gas tax cuts and fuel tax rate cuts until December 31, 2023.

The safety of all residents is a top priority for the government of Ontario, which is why we are continuing our commitment to ensuring that we'll be protecting you and your family. We'll be fighting gun-and-gang-related crime and building safer communities by investing \$13.4 million in 2023-24 as part of the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.

Madam Speaker, workers are the backbone of the economy of Ontario. Our government is committed to working for workers. We're expanding the Ontario Bridge Training Program with an additional \$3 million in 2023-24 to help internationally trained immigrants find employment in their fields and get faster access to training and support toward a licence or certificate. We're also enhancing the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program with an additional \$25 million over three years to attract more skilled workers, including in-demand professionals in the skilled trades, to the province.

The 2023 budget represents a significant investment in the future of our province. The government of Ontario is committed to building a stronger and more prosperous Ontario that will benefit all of our citizens.

Speaker, it takes ambition and willingness to be an entrepreneur, which is why we are providing an additional \$2 million in 2023-24 to Futurpreneur Canada, which helps entrepreneurs aged 18 to 39 achieve their business goals.

Ontario also needs a more stable and steady supply of another type of skilled worker, those in the health-related fields. Ontario needs more doctors, and there are many Ontario students who want to be doctors right here in the province, but there are not enough medical training seats available. Those who go on to study abroad have a hard time getting residencies back at home. That is why the government of Ontario is investing an additional \$33 million over three years to add 100 undergraduate seats, beginning in 2023, as well as 154 postgraduate medical training seats to prioritize Ontario students trained at home and abroad, beginning in 2024 and going forward. Ontario residents will also continue to be prioritized for undergraduate spots at medical schools in the province.

In Brampton, our government is opening the new TMU School of Medicine, which will see 175 total seats for medical professionals to be trained within the city of Brampton.

Speaker, seniors are the backbone of our community, and it is essential that we support them however we can. Our government has temporarily doubled the Guaranteed Annual Income System, GAINS, payment for 2023 to help approximately 200,000 eligible low-income seniors. To ensure that more seniors who need financial help get it, the government is proposing to make changes to expand the eligibility for GAINS, starting in July 2024, which would see about 100,000 more low-income seniors receive payments for a 50% increase in recipients.

We also realize the importance of having accessible long-term care close to home. The government is investing more than \$174 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to continue the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Program. The program leverages the skills of paramedics to provide additional care for seniors in the comfort of their own homes through:

- 24/7 access to health services through in-home, online and virtual supports;
- non-emergency home visits and in-home testing procedures;
- ongoing monitoring of changing conditions to prevent or reduce emergency incidents;

—additional education about healthy living and managing chronic diseases; and

—connections for participants and their families to home care and community supports.

Speaker, I urge all members to vote for this plan, to build Ontario's economy, to build highways and other infrastructure, to work for workers, to keep costs down and to serve the people of Ontario. Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023, is an important piece of legislation that will enable us to put this plan into action. I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Ms. Doly Begum: I listened to the member, and I know he talked specifically about long-term care, the health care system, some of the front-line workers. I have spoken with many paramedics recently who told me about the mental health crisis they've been going through over the past couple of years especially and how it has increased. Some of them can't even go back to work because of the struggle they're facing. Then obviously what we're seeing with our health care crisis and the need for staffing, which really is the biggest problem with our health care—it's not the need for privatization, let's be honest.

My question to the member is, why is the government fighting health care workers in court, wasting tax dollars, taxpayers' money on court cases, battling health care workers once again when we are facing a health care crisis?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Our government is making unprecedented investments in health care. Not only are we making unprecedented investments in health care, as part of this plan our government is building three new long-term-care homes in Brampton. The first new long-term care will have cultural—the community has been demanding long-term-care homes since 1990, culture-based long-term-care homes, and this is the government who's delivering this, and two more long-term-care homes.

And not only that, our government is also investing in growing and retaining the health care workforce. Since 2018, over 60,000 new nurses and nearly 8,000 new physicians have begun to work right here in the province of Ontario, but we know we need to build on this momentum. That is why our government is investing \$80 million over the next three years to further expand enrolment for nursing programs, and we'll continue to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Brampton West for making it very clear how this budget has helped us in developing Ontario and building Ontario. While we are in a time of economic uncertainty, could the member speak to how this proposed budget is a plan to navigate global economic uncertainty?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you so much to my friend from Richmond Hill for that wonderful question.

Speaker, the member is right: We are in global economic uncertainty. As the Minister of Finance highlighted in his speech, in the 2022-23 fiscal year, the deficit is projected to shrink to just \$2.2 billion, and in 2023-24, we plan to further reduce the deficit to \$1.3 billion, and then, Madam Speaker, we'll return Ontario to a modest surplus of \$200 million the following year.

Not only are we showing that it is possible to balance the budget while making unprecedented investments in health care, education, infrastructure, transit, highways and housing—we're making unprecedented investments in infrastructure: \$184 billion over the next 10 years. Not only are we building new schools, new hospitals and new highways, we're making unprecedented investments in broadband infrastructure. That is the basic infrastructure that every Ontarian deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for Brampton West for his remarks. Certainly there are good things in every budget; it would be nice if we could hear some of that from the Conservatives from time to time about previous Liberal budgets, but I digress.

Could you talk a little bit more about GAINS? You talked about that the program. It's ending on December 31—the doubling. Can you tell us why it's ending at that time?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: As I mentioned in my speech earlier, our government is temporarily doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for 2023, proposing changes to expand the GAINS program to see about 100,000 additional seniors be eligible for the program. Not only that, as I highlighted earlier, we're investing in long-term-care beds for seniors, free dental for low-income seniors and seniors community grants that will help seniors stay fit and active and connected in our communities.

The previous Liberal government has a record of not investing in these sectors: health care, education and infrastructure. I heard the member in her speech speaking about Ontario Place. It was the Liberal government that left that historic place in a state of neglect and disrepair when they had the opportunity to revitalize Ontario Place and bring it back to life. This is the government that believes in getting things done and getting things—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you so much.

Further debate?

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Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to weigh in on this budget debate for budget 2023, which is indeed disappointing for a lot of folks across communities. I'm pleased to share some of their voices in this space, because many of them were not heard.

I will say that it has been a disturbing trend for quite some time that many community groups and agencies and voices are directed to a different door when it comes to presenting to this government. The finance committee, as we know, is a multi-party committee that travels across

Ontario—arguably not enough. However, they travel to communities and hear from folks.

But then there's this side process where the Minister of Finance and government MPPs invite folks to this community chat, community consultation, where agencies might get three minutes each to share with the minister, and then people think, after they've done that, they've spoken to the Minister of Finance and to various local MPPs, that they've made a presentation on the budget. What they don't realize is there's no record of that that is public, whereas if they present to the finance committee, there's a record that the opposition parties have a chance to hear, have a chance to ask questions. There's Hansard—thank you to the folks who travel with committee and keep track of the voices—but these folks are directed to that side door that says, “Hey, come and present on the budget.”

Disappointingly, there are a number of our community agencies in Durham who have been rerouted and their voices did not make it into the committee hearings, so I wanted to share a few of those folks. But I just wanted to say, Speaker, I think that is really problematic. Now, I will say, it's always important, if you get a chance to talk to the minister face to face, you take it. But in addition to that, there is an accountable process that folks have been routed away from, and that is—well, I think it's a bit dirty, but anyway, it isn't how this place should work.

Some of the things that are missing from this budget are important to the folks in Durham region. There are seven members of this Legislature who represent at least part of Durham region—seven of us. I am the only non-government member, so my office is busy hearing from people who have concerns when it comes to government priorities.

I would like to share that something that was missing from this budget was funding to get the wheels turning for a new Lakeridge hospital. I want to read here from the Durham Business Alliance, which, as they say, represents the eight chambers of commerce and boards of trade of Durham region and a combined membership of approximately 2,500 local businesses and organizations.

They have said, “We are following up on our previous letter today to express our deep disappointment in the recent budget announcement which made no provision for funding a planning grant for a new regional hospital and trauma centre for Lakeridge Health in Durham region. We believe that the lack of funding for a new hospital is a major oversight in the budget. Durham region, with its growing population, is in dire need of additional hospitals,” and they list the various reasons.

They've said, “A new hospital for Lakeridge Health would not only address the issue of aging infrastructure, but also provide much-needed capacity to serve the growing population of Durham region. Lakeridge Health is ready to meet these demands ... we urge the government to recognize Lakeridge Health's recommendation and reconsider its decision and allocate funding for a planning grant for the new hospital in Durham region,” and they said “no later than” the fall economic statement.

Of course, I support that, Speaker. As I said, there are seven of us in this chamber who are hearing the need is great and to not see it reflected in the budget is too bad, but there is a chance for this government to course-correct.

We've also been talking about mental health and health care in this House. I wish, though, that we were seeing more funds directed to places that would make a difference.

Here I have a submission from Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, affectionately known as Ontario Shores. They have said, “Despite the urgent need, Ontario Shores does not currently have an emergency department to provide the necessary acute mental health care to Ontarians in need. We are requesting funding and approval from the government of Ontario to build and construct Canada's first emergency psychiatric assessment, treatment and healing unit,” or EmPATH for short. “EmPATH is a psychiatric emergency care model that is transforming mental health care in the United States.

“We require a \$1-million capital planning grant and approval of our stage 2 submission with the Ministry of Health.” They go on to explain how this model sets itself apart from others and would make an unbelievable, immeasurable difference in our community, but beyond our community, in the province.

It says, “The benefits of an EmPATH emergency department at Ontario Shores would have wider implications for Ontario's health system. A model like this at Ontario Shores would reduce the strain on the province's emergency rooms, allow for better, more specialized care for people in mental health crises, and free up resources for other emergency services.

“As one of only four provincially specialized mental health hospitals in Ontario, we are uniquely positioned to introduce this concept to Canada and are requesting a capital planning grant for this project as part of the upcoming Ontario budget...” They go on to say they have support from the “Durham MPPs, mayors of Oshawa, Whitby, Pickering, Durham regional chair, health care professionals, staff, and people in the wider community supporting our vision of transforming mental health care in the province. Partners such as Durham Regional Police Service and Region of Durham Paramedic Services have endorsed this project...” They've garnered over 8,000 signatures of Ontarians who want to see this first EmPATH emergency department built at Ontario Shores.

But alas, it was not in the budget. I would love to know why. If mental health is actually a priority for this government, here is a really big opportunity, and this would be a significant ribbon to cut for this government, but more importantly, would have remarkable impacts on people in need.

Speaker, I also wanted to raise the topic of hospice. I had actually a quick chat with Joyce Marshall in our community the other day at a community event, and she was very excited to be an ambassador for Hospice Whitby. They have decided on a name and unveiled that: the Hospice Whitby–Roger Anderson House. A lot of community care and interest and involvement in this project,

but Whitby and Clarington hospice folks are asking for money. I know that they asked at these community consultations I was telling you about, that were a side process to the budget hearing. They did not actually get to present to the finance committee because they didn't know they hadn't—they thought this community consultation was sufficient. Hopefully, it was. And yet, the money isn't in this budget.

I hope that the two or two and a half million each that they are asking for is something that this government can figure out, because what hospice would mean and those beds and that care for the community of Durham—as we have seen, Port Perry is a good-news story, the hospice there. As someone who has seen hospice up close and personally when my mother passed, and I know how important it can be and I know, frankly, how beautiful that the pieces that they add to a very challenging time for families can be, I do believe that this should be a priority for this government or any government.

Speaker, I want to go on to also share how challenging it is for folks. I got a letter from someone named Jennifer in Owen Sound. She had seen remarks that I made in this Legislature and said, “As you are aware, life on ODSP is hard. But the real nightmare is living with the knowledge that life will only get harder. A few years ago my fridge broke so now I use my 12-year old-freezer and a cooler, my shoes are coming apart so I hot-glue them back together, my electric kettle can take anywhere from five to 15 minutes as it shuts off repeatedly before the water boils. But I wait for the day the freezer breaks down, when my shoes are too bad to be glued and the kettle doesn't boil at all. And that day is coming.

“I appreciate that you ... see myself and people like me as persons who are doing all they can and wish every day that we could do better. But the fact that we can't shouldn't mean we live everyday with the terror of a hard life becoming an unbearable one.

“Thank you for fighting for us to live without this fear,” wrote Jennifer from Owen Sound.

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Speaker, people are hurting, as we have talked about with food banks. I have a really thoughtful letter from Ben Earle, the executive director of Feed the Need in Durham, who laid out recently in the paper for us about: “more clients than ever before who are fully employed, who own their” own “homes, and who would have historically been able to meet the demands of their household budgets. That is no longer the case.” Speaker, there is need in this province not being met.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions? The member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and through you: This budget, the budget bill that we're talking about today, included \$13.4 million as part of the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy. The member for Oshawa will know well the level of investment historically that this government has taken, including this new money that will be going into the good work that the Durham Regional Police Service will be doing with this funding.

Does the member from Oshawa agree that this level of funding for the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy will continue to have the level of effectiveness in the region of Durham that we've known for the last eight years?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the question from the member from Whitby. Of course, we share Durham region and are grateful for any measures that keep us safe. But I also wanted to respond back with what I have heard from victim services about the need. Those impacted by violence—their needs are not being met. Victim services' core funding across the province—they have not had reasonable core funding increases in years, and the funding formula is not tied to the numbers of clients. So they're still receiving the same amount of funding today to serve 10,000 clients in our region that they were when they were serving only 3,200.

When we talk to the folks who do that unbelievable work for victim services, they are bringing real solutions to the table. And I would ask this government to consider how we retain that staff to do that unbelievable caring work when they are paid \$37,000 yearly. The burnout and turnover is astronomical, and this is a government that is choosing to let that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Oshawa for really addressing the issue of hospice care and the desperate need for addressing the funding formula and making it more fair and actually meeting the operational costs of hospices across the province.

We heard at finance committee that every dollar invested in compassionate palliative care really also saves the health care system so much money. But I think when she commented on her own mother and sharing that experience with all of us, it's very personal. We know this to be very true, that dying in Ontario can be a really horrendous experience if you're not supported and you don't get the grief counselling that you need. And so I wanted her to address, please, the fact that hospices are only funded 60% of operational costs. How does that impact equity of access to those services across Ontario?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It's frustrating to hear from the folks who are doing the heavy lifting of the fundraising and trying to get the word out to communities about the benefits of hospice.

I have here some speaking remarks from Eva Reti, the Durham Region Hospice board chair. She had presented to council in Ajax and talked about the future of the 10-bed hospice residence in Whitby, which is one of three locations approved by the Ministry of Health. She outlined the challenges, that their original tender process in January—well, the project came in approximately \$3.5 million more than originally estimated, which is a reflection on the broader world, the current construction situation since the pandemic. And so it's back to the drawing board, it's back to the door-knocking, and it's back to the fundraising. They are plugging away, but to know that they had the government supporting them in a very real

way that would bring this care and benefit into the community and to more communities—what a difference that would make in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I just want to say that Ontario has been successful in attracting manufacturers, and we are promoting the products that are manufactured in Ontario, so we need a lot of skilled workers. I would like to ask the question: Will the opposition support the proposed investment of \$25 million in the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program so that Ontario can welcome more newcomers and will have the skilled labourers to help build Ontario?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, if we were able to pull certain things out of the budget to vote on one at a time, there are some highlights and positives in this budget. What the member just raised—it is immensely important to recognize the skills coming to the province to ensure that there is economic opportunity and fairness for more folks. I know that we would all hopefully work as partners in that regard. When it comes to economic opportunity and communities—I live in Oshawa, right? We have a wonderful opportunity now in the automotive sector that I hope we get to keep. It wasn't that long ago that I stood here and it was all on the brink. So jobs in community, giving people opportunity—that is part of why I am here, and hopefully that is something we all can get behind.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I truly appreciated the story that you shared from your constituent who is on ODSP with a kettle that doesn't work, with shoes that she needs to glue back together in order to be able to have decent shoes, with the different problems directly linked to poverty. We all know that poverty is the number one determinant of health. For every \$5,000 more you make a year, we can see the improvement in the health of each and every one of us. Could you share with us how much money there is in the budget to help your constituent on ODSP receive enough money so that she can live a healthy life? How much money is in the budget so that she receives enough money to be out of poverty?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Not enough. And actually, the letter that I shared was from someone who was just watching what we do here and was from Owen Sound—it wasn't a constituent of mine but could be any of our constituents.

When you talk about the impacts of poverty when it comes to health, I want to read from a letter here, a family physician has written a prescription about a patient. He said this man, his patient, “has requested this letter of support regarding income security programs. He is currently receiving benefits under the Ontario Disability Support Program. With the rising cost of housing, rent, energy, utilities, food etc., he and others on ODSP are struggling to maintain good health. These individuals invariably reside in small, congregated or at times poorly maintained housing units which can have a negative effect on their mental and physical health. Spending most of their monthly benefit on rent leaves limited funds for proper nutrition and recreational activities. A poor, nutritionally

depleted diet is a risk factor for many chronic diseases leading to increased morbidity and mortality and subsequent increased cost to the health care system.”

His doctor is writing doctor's notes about how bad it is for patients in poverty.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I come from the Essex region, and in Essex region, we used to have General Motors, but as a result of the lack of automotive policies from the Liberal government, General Motors left the Essex region. The member from Oshawa was speaking—and the member from Oshawa is very fortunate, because not only is General Motors still in Oshawa, but based on the remarkable economic governance of the province by this PC government, General Motors has committed an additional \$2 billion to Oshawa and Ingersoll in automotive investments. That's \$2 billion more. Will the member vote in favour of keeping automotive investment in Oshawa based on this government's policies?

1700

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I live in Oshawa, where we have a long history of automotive excellence, and we will have a long future, thanks to the workers, the product that they put out. Silverado sales are up; that's great. This is a government, though, that—I stood here opposite them when we were in crisis and had to listen to “the ship has left the dock,” and that there was no point in hope, that I was peddling false hope. I was glad to stand with the community at that time, and I always will.

This is a government that ripped out charging stations when the automotive industry was saying the future is electric—well, it is electric. In fact, the Premier did a fun little dance the other day and finally has acknowledged that. So I look forward to working towards the infrastructure that will support that industry in our community—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's a great pleasure to rise and speak to the budget measures act for fiscal year 2023-24 this afternoon.

Although the province faces skyrocketing costs of living, unaffordable housing and a health care system in crisis, budget 2023 offers no relief as more and more Ontarians struggle each and every day just to get by. It's a budget that tells Ontarians that they're on their own.

I want to start by discussing how the residents of Ottawa are once again being forgotten by this Conservative government. In the 2023 budget, there was announced \$202 million per year in new funding for supportive housing and homelessness projects, but the city of Ottawa's allocation is disproportionately small. Ottawa is, of course, the second-largest city in Ontario, only after Toronto. Although the city of Toronto has a population three times the size of Ottawa, it's receiving 60 times more funding than the nation's capital. It's absolutely unacceptable that Toronto has received over \$40 million for the same program, while Ottawa is set to receive a comparatively measly \$845,100. The Premier ignored Ottawa during the occupation, he abandoned farmers after the derecho storm left them in crisis, and he is now, once again, abandoning the city as we have people who need affordable housing

options and are living on the street. This insufficient funding could force the city of Ottawa to cancel 54 supportive housing units that were expected to become operational over the next 18 months, and it will severely compromise Ottawa's 10-year housing and homelessness plan to build between 570 and 850 new affordable housing options. According to Ottawa's mayor, based on Toronto's allocation, Ottawa should be getting in the range of at least \$16 million, but they're only receiving \$845,000. Ontario's second-largest city should be treated fairly and should be provided with sufficient funding to meet the needs of its residents.

The 2023 budget also does not include any funding for the victims of the 2022 derecho storm in Ottawa—one of the most notorious storms in Canadian history. In fact, the storm was ranked as the sixth-costliest natural disaster in Canadian history, amounting to over \$875 million in damage. The storm caused widespread damage to residential and commercial property, farms and public utilities, killing 11 people and leaving 1.1 million without power. To put it in context for some of the members from the GTA, the derecho surpassed the damages incurred during the devastating 2005 flooding here in Toronto. Buildings in these Ottawa-area communities like Navan and Carlsbad Springs still have holes in the walls or are without roofs because of the lack of disaster relief from this government. We've heard a lot from this government about how they support small, rural communities, but when it comes to rural communities in Ottawa, that support is non-existent. And let's not forget: In addition to denying homeowners and farmers the opportunity to apply for provincial disaster relief funding, the Premier has yet to fulfill his promise to the city of Ottawa or to Hydro Ottawa to help with the costs of cleanup. The city and hydro have spent upwards of, if not more than, \$50 million to recover from the storm, without any provincial support. Despite the Premier stopping in to station 53 in Orléans during the election to thank firefighters for their cleanup efforts, he still hasn't put a single provincial dollar behind it. So what's the message being sent to first responders? "I'll come for the photo op, but I won't deliver the goods."

The cold shoulder being shown to Ottawa doesn't stop there. It's even bigger. Ontario is facing—and Ottawa is facing—a massive shortage of family doctors and a high demand for primary care.

Just to list a few challenges that family doctors are facing across the province and in the nation's capital: human resource challenges; shortages of nurses and administrative staff; a rise in the severity of illnesses due to deferred procedures or delays in seeking treatment throughout the pandemic; and ongoing financial pressures as commercial rents go up and up and up.

These problems, in addition to many other factors, are affecting the quality of care for patients and contributing to emergency backlogs in our hospitals, and the government continues to do absolutely nothing to support primary care in Ottawa.

Instead of addressing the lack of family doctors, the government has announced their plan to increase private, for-profit medicine. And while the long-term impacts of this are not yet clear, what is evident is that it will not help

address the shortage of family doctors or the decision many of them are making to close their practices. There is nothing in the budget to help family doctors continue to do what they do and what they love to do, and that's help us stay healthy.

Un autre échec important dans le budget de 2023, c'est le manque de financement pour le MIFO, le plus grand centre culturel francophone de l'Ontario. Le MIFO offre des programmes artistiques et éducatifs à la communauté francophone, et le bâtiment actuel est extrêmement obsolète, madame la Présidente, et ne répond pas aux besoins de la communauté. Le MIFO a un projet d'expansion audacieux qui lui permettrait de fournir des services plus efficaces à un plus grand nombre de personnes dans l'est de la ville et, vraiment, tout partout dans l'Ontario. Ce projet est essentiel à la croissance de leur organisation et au succès de la communauté francophone d'Ottawa. Le MIFO a fait de nombreuses demandes au gouvernement pour les fonds nécessaires pour cette expansion, mais jusqu'à date il n'y a aucune réponse positive de ce gouvernement.

The government is also failing Ontario's municipalities by leaving them high and dry with Bill 23. Last fall, when the government introduced Bill 23, experts and planners warned the government that there would be consequences with removing development charges without compensation for municipalities. Development charges are what municipalities use to build complete communities. They help pay for new roads and new sidewalks and new parks and new rec centres and new fire stations and police stations. It's what helps cities build complete communities.

And once again, the government didn't listen. The government, in November, said that they would be conducting audits in municipalities and, based on those results, may step up and help support them financially for their loss. But six months later, the only audits announced are those in—guess what?—Toronto and Peel region. Once again, Ottawa is ignored, and there's no indication whether or not municipalities, including the city of Ottawa, will get their audit in order to evaluate the loss of revenue as a result of provincial policy.

So as you can see, Madam Speaker, budget 2023 will not make life more affordable for anyone. Ontarians are in desperate need for support during these challenging times of runaway inflation and the affordability crisis that we're all facing, but this government is turning a blind eye. With the cost of groceries going up, with the cost of hydro going up, with the cost of gas going up, with the cost of everything Ontarians buy each and every day going up, the government has done nothing. They're saying you're on your own, and that's what getting it done looks like, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for his comments. I listened to what the member had to say, but I earlier heard from the member from Carleton, who gave a great speech talking about all of the investments that this government has made in the Ottawa area. The president of Invest Ottawa had a great quote: "With hundreds of tech companies, innovative R&D facilities

and a world-class workforce, the Ottawa region is a global tech hub with the highest concentration of tech talent in North America. This government budget firmly secures the key role we play in our community and Ontario, enabling us to serve more high-growth entrepreneurs and companies that fuel our economy. It will help us to achieve an even greater economic impact and ensure that innovative businesses in Ottawa continue to grow and succeed today and for years to come. We're grateful to the government of Ontario for this critical investment in our community." Why isn't the member opposite grateful for these kinds of investments?

1710

Mr. Stephen Blais: When the derecho hit Ottawa and devastated communities right across the city, when it knocked out hydro to tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people across our city, the community was devastated. And then, a couple of days later, the Premier came—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. I believe the member from Orléans had the floor. Please respond.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

When the Premier came to Orléans after the derecho to visit the fire station, there was great hope that there would be investment from the province to help farmers recover, to help Hydro Ottawa pay for the tens of millions of dollars they spent cleaning up from the storm. Unfortunately, while there was a lot of talk and there were a lot of photos to try to help their Conservative candidate win in the Orléans riding, none of those promises were backed up in real life. There is not a single dollar to help the city of Ottawa or Hydro Ottawa from the derecho as part of this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Orléans for his comments. I'm glad he mentioned the failure of the government to reimburse municipalities for the billions of dollars in revenue that was lost, even comparing municipalities the other day in question period to beggars going hat in hand to the province.

What are some of the negative effects if Ottawa is not reimbursed for the revenues that they lost in terms of tax increases and service cuts?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, thank you. I appreciate the question. As I mentioned, development charges are critical to helping build complete communities. And in Ottawa, one of the most development-charge-funded projects that's on the books is the new recreation centre in Riverside South. If the city of Ottawa doesn't collect development charges to build that recreation centre in Riverside South, which I believe is in the riding of Carleton, they won't be able to afford it. That is an important investment for the people of Riverside South and the residents of Findlay Creek so that they can have swimming lessons for their kids, they can have basketball practice for their kids,

sporting events and everything that a recreation centre provides. Those are the kinds of important community investments that development charges help to fund. Those are the investments that are at risk if the government doesn't step up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: This question is for the member. The previous government has a long history of spending way more than its income. In 2003, when they were in government, the provincial debt was \$138.8 billion, and when they stepped down in 2018, the provincial debt was \$323.8 billion; it increased 133%. Their accumulated debt is way more than the accumulation of hundreds of years of debt. Theirs is such a record of spending and no investment, and this is a budget that can effectively bring in billions, billions, billions of dollars of investment, so I want to see why the member opposite is not supporting this budget.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, I remember the previous Liberal government creating full-day kindergarten, which has dramatically improved the education system in the province of Ontario. I remember the previous Liberal government stepping in to save the auto industry, jobs that the current government is proud to take credit for, and Conservatives voted against saving the auto industry during the Great Recession.

In fact, the biggest critic of the current industrial policy to help the automotive industry here in Ontario, Madam Speaker, is the leader of the Conservative Party; he's the biggest critic of the plan to invest in Ontario's auto sector—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's the time that we have.

Further debate? The member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to hear from you the best riding: Mississauga–Malton, the home of the greater Toronto airport—you've been there, I'm sure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I just want to correct the member on his record. The best riding is Carleton.

Please continue.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I forgot. Sorry about that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is always a pleasure to rise in the House to discuss the important work that we are doing, like today, budget 2023, and all the things this government, under the leadership of this Premier, is doing for the workers and the families of our great province.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, every day when I drive to Queen's Park, I see the infrastructure. I see the beautiful buildings. But I have to say this: It didn't happen overnight. It didn't happen by itself. It was built by hard-working Ontarians over many, many generations.

So as always, I'd like to start by thanking the Indigenous community for taking care of this land for thousands of years. Thank you for allowing us to meet here. And thank you to all the immigrants who came to Canada

before I landed and after I landed, especially those who came 300 or 500 years back and worked hard to build our country. Many of their descendants are the MPPs, my colleagues here, so I just want to say thank you as always to your ancestors for their hard work.

Madam Speaker, since 2018, that is exactly what this government is also doing: building a strong Ontario, an Ontario which allows everyone to realize our dreams. But it's not going to happen by itself; to do this, we need to build. To build, we need skilled workers, and to ensure workers are given every opportunity, pathway and skill they need to secure better jobs with bigger paycheques.

Through this bill, government is working with workers by committing an investment of \$224 million in the upcoming fiscal year to establish a groundbreaking initiative within the Skills Development Fund, a new capital stream to help build the necessary infrastructure to ensure Ontario's economic potential. This transformative capital stream would harness the power of sector-specific expertise and bolster our existing training infrastructure, including union training halls, to create more accessible and flexible training opportunities for our valued workers.

Madam Speaker, in this rapidly evolving world of work, it is essential to equip our workforce, including those who are thinking about upskilling and advancing their careers, with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the ever-changing job market. Through the Skills Development Fund's new capital stream, we will expand the capacity of training centres across our province, ensuring that workers get the skills they need for these in-demand careers. Our investment will not only support the expansion of physical infrastructure, but also fuel the development of cutting-edge training programs. Investing in our training centres and union training halls equips students with the hands-on learning opportunities needed to develop the skills of our future.

And why is this important, Madam Speaker? It is important because it impacts all of our members. It impacts all of Ontario. Why? Because every worker deserves the opportunity to reach their potential, and this investment reaffirms our commitment to provide accessible, flexible and high-quality training options.

As a first-generation immigrant, I know how difficult it is sometimes to adjust to a new place. Family reunions and far distance are some of the big challenges. I'll give you an example. My mother, for example, is in India, and last month she was not feeling well. Well, as I was celebrating Mother's Day, I was happy I spoke to her, but I was concerned about her health. But I couldn't travel because of the commitments with work and family here. These are some of the challenges we see, and we have to make the balance.

Another example I was thinking about is that whenever we talk about every day passing that brings us one day closer to the end of our lives, it is a reminder to cherish each day and make the most of the time we have.

1720

Madam Speaker, I believe in personal heroes. They're like a GPS, helping us to navigate through our life. My

personal hero, for example, is Bhai Kanhaiya, "a soul so kind, served all the love, with no one left behind." He believed that God lives in all of us. If we want to serve God, the best way is to serve people. When we serve people, we serve God. That is why it is important, when we come here, that we work and we're able to get opportunity to serve the people.

Under the leadership of this Premier, our government is investing an additional \$25 million over the next three years to enhance the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. Ontario has long been recognized as a destination of choice for skilled immigrants, and with this enhanced program, we aim to further strengthen our position as a hub of talent and innovation. The investment will allow us to streamline and expedite the immigration process, making it more efficient for skilled workers to come to Ontario and contribute to our vibrant labour market. Madam Speaker, receiving the important investment, we're able to help over 18,361, which is double what we have today under this program.

Providing the Ontario bridge training program with \$3 million this fiscal year will help internationally trained immigrants find jobs in their field. We're also investing \$32.4 million over the next three years to support 6,500 high-quality research internships.

Madam Speaker, health care is another big focus for our government. We are providing an additional \$425 million over three years to connect more people to mental health and addictions services; accelerating investments to bring funding in 2023-24 to \$569 million, including nearly \$300 million to support contract rate increases to stabilize the home and community care workforce; and investing \$3.3 million over three years for expanding health-care-related courses for 1,400 secondary school students.

Simply put, this budget delivers a loud and clear message, a message that we, as a government, are building up this province of Ontario with prosperity.

To everyone watching across the globe, if you're looking to invest, then this is the province. This is the place where you have a business environment that is welcoming and you have a government that is progressive.

If you're an immigrant looking to build a life, come to Ontario. We have a government that is providing support to you and will help you upskill and build a life you will be proud of. We can't wait to welcome you to join us in this journey to make Ontario stronger.

Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone in this House, if you want to build a better Ontario, a strong Ontario, vote in favour of this bill to build a stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga-Malton for his presentation.

During the pre-budget consultations, we heard from many different organizations and individuals who were deeply concerned about the current housing allotment under the Ontario Disability Support Program. They advocated for an increase to that because the cost of living is so much higher than it has been in the past, but also—before

this member answers and goes to the talking points about the paltry 5% increase—what we heard from people was that many people are struggling to afford basic necessities. Why has this government chosen to only support people living with disabilities by 5%, still leaving them underneath the poverty line?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. When we talked about supporting Ontarians and I said that supporting all Ontarians—and you actually answered it somewhat as well, that we have increased support by 5%, and not just supporting only one time with a 5% increase. It is actually connected to inflation, so that going forward, whatever the inflation rate is, it gets increased by a similar amount.

Madam Speaker, that is what we're doing with this budget: We're actually investing. We're making an historic investment in the whole community, and we will continue to do so to build a stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: The member from Mississauga–Malton will know that we're investing over \$182 million this year in the hospital infrastructure renewal fund and the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund to support critical upgrades and repairs at 131 hospitals and 65 community health care facilities across the province. Can the member from Mississauga–Malton speak about the effect of the budget funding and the effects and impacts on his families in his riding?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Whitby for his incredible work. He talks about the investments that we're making through this budget. We're making historic investments, whether it is building Ontario's economy, whether it is supporting Ontario's residents or making investments in health care. For an example, we're investing \$6.4 billion committed to building and upgrading long-term care; \$1.25 billion is available for hiring and retaining staff; \$300 million for reducing wait times; \$1.1 billion for home care. These are the investments the government is making because we want to make

sure that if you come to Ontario and you live in Ontario, you have a good life.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I just want to remind the member about the use of a prop.

Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: My friend from Mississauga–Malton and I heard the same delegations, and we got such different information, apparently, because the fact of the matter is, on the autism file, autism isn't even mentioned one time in this budget—or even in your prop, I'm sure. But I have to say, we heard very clearly from Bruce McIntosh from the Ontario Autism Coalition, who said, "Listen, this is a bureaucratic mess. Red tape is preventing children from receiving services."

My question is an honest question to the member: You have families with autism in your riding. The wait-list now is at 65,000. Why did this budget not address the desperate need for autism services across the province of Ontario?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Waterloo. We had the opportunity to work together when we were visiting place to place for the budget consultations.

Madam Speaker, the member was talking about the youth and the services, so I just want to quote some of the quotations. I'm going to read from the CEO of Safehaven, for example: "Safehaven is incredibly grateful for the funding commitment from" the minister and Premier Ford. This government's support of the most vulnerable will impact the lives of many children, "ensuring that Safehaven has the capacity."

And then another one, from the Child Welfare PAC and a former youth in care: "By implementing the Ready, Set, Go framework, the Ontario government is beginning to break down the complex barriers faced by the youth from care" whose experience is helping and supporting the people in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the things we've been doing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Report continues in volume B.

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Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjini, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaled (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kanata—Carleton	
Vacant	Scarborough—Guildwood	